



Bill Drost with Mike and Lorna Wieteska

BILL DROST

THE PENTECOST

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by Bill Drost with Mike and Lorna Wieteska

Originally published in two volumes as

Man with a Destiny and *A Destiny Beyond Death*

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Original *Man with a Destiny*

A Destiny Beyond Death

Revised edition ©2000 by Word Aflame Press

Hazelwood, MO 63042-2299

ISBN 1-56722-245-5

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Printed in United States of America

Printed by



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Drost, Bill, d. 1979.

Bill Drost, the Pentecost / Bill Drost, with Mike Wieteska and Lorna Wieteska.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-56722-245-5

1. Drost, Bill, d. 1979. 2. Pentecostals—Biography. 3. Missionaries—Biography. I. Wieteska, Mike. II. Wieteska, Lorna. III. Title.

BV3705.D76 A3 2000

289.9'4'092—dc21

[B]

00-026802

To my beloved wife, Ruth, who gave so much and received so little.

And to four sons— Gerald, Wynn, Wayne, and Verner— who were so dearly loved by their father and who have been such a comfort and strength to their mother since she has been alone.

The authors are greatly indebted to

Mrs. Ruth Drost

for her vast amount of help in preparing this work from tapes made by her husband shortly before his death on March 5, 1979.

—Mike and Lorna Wieteska

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Foreword

Bill Drost—that name is still alive in the hearts of thousands and will continue to live in their minds and lives for many generations to come, should Jesus tarry.

When I first met Bill Drost on the old Newcastle Bridge Campgrounds, New Brunswick, Canada, in the summer of 1931, he had been saved for about a year. He was a freckle-faced boy of sixteen with a brush cut who told me he wanted to go to South America as a missionary. My first reaction was, “It’s all right if he does, and it’s all right if he doesn’t.” Bill made no attempt to push himself; I do not recall seeing him on a church platform until after he returned from World War II, some fifteen years later.

But Bill went to work, both manually and spiritually. On weekends he would often drive for miles to talk with one or more boys and introduce them to eternal life in Jesus Christ the Lord. He would also bring them to church, and in those days he taught a Sunday school class. Many of the boys he taught became his faithful supporters until the Master called him to rest on March 5, 1979. The zeal and fire that burned in his breast to the end is today burning in the hearts of many—young and old. They have caught the torch and are carrying it high, with love and integrity.

It was my esteemed privilege to be Bill’s secretary and coworker from the day his missionary career began until the day it ended on this earth. I was often in touch with him several times a month and, during the last ten or twelve years, weekly. Each Sunday night—after his day’s work was through—while others slept, he would write me telling of the blessings of the day and of how the Spirit of God moved in his soul to anoint the Word.

You will be inspired and blessed as you read the pages of this book. It will let you know what God can and will do through a yielded, unselfish vessel who did not care who got the credit as long as God got the glory, who helped searching hearts find rest for their souls. Bill was no pros-elytizer—he dug his converts from virgin soil.

He would much rather go where no one else had been and there witness for the gospel of Jesus Christ. When I got in his way, he had a way of “shaking” me so he would have a free hand to obey the Spirit as God led; it worked, and souls were saved indeed. Someone has said that Bill Drost won more souls by accident than most of us do on purpose. I believe that.

Bill Drost did not ask for money—yet he was always giving money away. He did not ask for guarantees from anyone—he only asked for continuous prayer. He had one goal—to win souls and glorify God. One time while I was travelling with him, I heard him in the bathroom early in the morning reading the Bible aloud. When I asked him the reason for reading aloud, he replied, “I wanted the devil to hear it.”

Rest on, Brother Bill. You are missed. Your seat is empty because no one can fill it. We promise you we will labor on until the day breaks and the shadows flee away—then we will sit down together and talk it over.

Bill Drost had some faults as we all have, yet he was of unlimited value. Thousands will meet him in the kingdom and say, “It was you who invited me here!”

—Wynn T. Stairs

Preface

For some time now I have been impressed by the Spirit of the Lord to write something about Bill Drost's life. I would like to have the joy of sharing these nuggets of gold with the many who will read this book.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to walk life's pathway with him for thirty-four years. My appreciation of him grew as I watched him obey the call of God under trying and seemingly impossible conditions. I learned, very soon after we were married, that it was worthless to try to change his mind when he had heard from God about any major moves that we needed to make. No sacrifice was too great, no barrier too big, when it came to bringing souls to Jesus, for he had caught the vision of the worth of a soul, and his main desire in life was to win many for the Lord. His experiences in the army; being jailed for the sake of the gospel and escaping for his life; the long, exhausting trips on jungle trails; the times when his body was wracked with pain and fever—all helped to urge him on to greater victories.

Bill's love for his four sons was obvious, and even though his duties took him often on long trips, he could hardly wait to get home to be with his family, to romp and play with the boys and be their companion. The boys followed in their dad's footsteps, not because he tried to insist that they be missionaries, but because he lived such a fulfilled life before them. They felt his heart pulse as they watched him labor with eternal values in view, and they caught his vision of the worth of a soul.

I have had the joy of seeing the work of God grow in Spain, where Bill last pioneered and toiled on virgin soil. Several of the national pastors are men whom he baptized and nurtured in the Lord. His grave stands as a monument to a man who dearly loved the Spanish people and whose untiring labors of love still live on as others have hearkened to the call to go. Many times since his passing, even though I have had to fight loneliness and fear, I have been impelled by the love of Jesus to fill my role—to encourage, lift, and strengthen these pastors and my sons—because of the courageous

example that Bill set before me.

Where are the young men who will say yes to the call of the Master today? There is such a shortage of laborers, and the fields are white already to harvest. Opportunities are presented everywhere. You could never fill Bill Drost's place; that is not required of you. But there is a place that only you can fill, and the voice of God is pleading with you just now as you read these words. Give Him a chance—be a soulwinner for Jesus.

—Ruth Drost

CHAPTER One

Northern Europe, 1944-45

On December 10, 1944, President Roosevelt, in a long letter of reply to Winston Churchill concerning the course of the war, wrote that “even the Almighty was helping.”

The Almighty was helping in another place too: He was helping an obscure Canadian private who was destined to fight on in another type of warfare on another battleground. But Bill Drost at that moment did not know he had a destiny. In fact, his future seemed singularly short.

By D-Day, Caen had been liberated, and thirty Allied divisions—half American and half British and Canadian—were lodged on the Normandy bridgehead anticipating the thrust into Germany. The Canadian First Army, an all-volunteer body under General Crerar, was fighting with the British Second Army under the overall control of Field Marshal Montgomery.

The first task of the Canadians had been to drive south towards Falaise, holding the concentrated strength of the enemy’s four Panzer divisions, while the U.S. First Army under General Bradley swept through on the west to clear the Cherbourg Peninsula. After taking Falaise in August they had been assigned to clear the Allied western flank, pressing along the coast from Le Havre to the shores of the Scheldt below Antwerp. The port of Antwerp, left almost intact by the Germans due to the speed of the Allied advance, was of great strategic importance. However, the enemy still controlled both sides of the river approaches, denying safe passage. Much bitter fighting was necessary to clear the Scheldt estuary, while the island of Walcheren would not succumb until a fierce air and sea bombardment, followed by a commando assault. The fierce fighting of this single battle would later be made famous by Saunders in his book *The Green Beret*.

Pushing through dreadful November rains towards southern Holland, the Canadians found themselves by February in the

Nijmegen salient, between the rivers Meuse and Rhine, just south of ill-fated Arnhem. From here, as part of the Twenty-first Army Group, they were to thrust southeastward to Wesel, and make a bridgehead over the Rhine. Simultaneously, further south, Bradley's Twelfth Army Group would drive the enemy across the Rhine on a massive front between Dusseldorf and Koblenz.

The Allied plan was to skirt the north of the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, and advance across the north German plain towards Hamburg and the Baltic. At the same time a second thrust would race eastward toward Kassel, leaving the Ruhr to be subdued later. Facing the First Canadian Army were eleven strongly entrenched German divisions whose morale was high; these factors, added to the difficulties caused by waterlogged ground, slowed the advance.

To the south of the Canadian position the U.S. First Army captured the upstream dams of the Roer, enabling the U.S. Ninth, fighting further downstream, to cross this river safely. Striking west and north, the Americans reached the environs of Dusseldorf by early March, and the Canadians, now able to renew their attack, pressed to Xanten. The two armies met, forcing the enemy to abandon the Wesel bridgehead, and by March 10 eighteen German divisions had retreated across the Rhine. From the ravaged west bank the Allies now looked out a quarter mile eastward to the river's far shore.

An air strike eclipsed only by that of D-Day was mounted for the Rhine crossing: wave after wave of bombers from as far as Britain and Italy swept deep into Germany. In one-half hour, a paratroop assault with two thousand aircraft roared over the Rhine.

By the early hours of that morning the British Second and U.S. Ninth Armies, under Montgomery, had made bridgeheads north and south of Wesel, leaving the Canadians to protect their left flank. The Canadians then crossed the river, driving northward to Emmerich. Here again, because of powerful defense structures, the heaviest resistance was met, and forward troops were forced into a bottleneck impossible to bypass. The Germans had placed an obstacle in front of this bottleneck, at the same time concentrating massive firepower on the area. It was a trap, but the obstacle had to be cleared, so the engineers were called forward to try to blast a

way through.

A squad of them huddled behind cover, waiting apprehensively for the order to go in. Then an officer detailed one of them to take a charge of dynamite over the obstacle. Immediately as he stepped forward a hail of bullets pummeled him, killing him instantly. A second man was detailed and made a dash. Three yards forward, bullets ripped into his shoulder and he too fell, twisting and writhing in agony on the open ground.

“OK, Drost, you go in,” ordered the officer.

War has many facets. In a way it was a paradox that Bill Drost was in the army at all. Had he not joined a volunteer army, yet determined never to carry a rifle? But the reason he was here today went back a long time . . . back to before he was ten years old.



CHAPTER Two

Devil, Don't Get Me!

Nothing could have been further removed from the hell of Europe at war—with its narrow, sniper-ridden streets; its shellfire-racked, foreshortened fields; its compartmentalized countryside with towns encroaching on villages—than the farm on the rolling hills of New Brunswick where Bill Drost was born on May Day, 1915.

From the old farmhouse, a large, rambling building set on a hill, you could look around in all directions and see only one other homestead. The neighbors, good, plain, down-to-earth folk who knew just how a little boy should be treated, gave Bill delicious homemade cookies whenever he visited them. Bill charmed delicacies from other neighborhood women by keeping them supplied with patterns for hand-knit mats, in vogue at the time. He had a natural flair for art and at one point considered becoming an artist.

But it was not all idyllic. For one thing, there had been a sort of transformation in his parents' way of life: They had come under the influence of a sect called "Go Preachers" and had named Bill after the leading "Go Preacher" in the community. Mama hoped Bill would live up to his name and had called him "the Go Preacher" from the time he was small, but Bill found them a dull group. One of their main platforms was to vehemently condemn church buildings and insist on meeting only in homes. Belonging to the sect also caused him to feel isolated at school, because the children who went to Sunday school ridiculed and harassed the "Go kids," who didn't. Still, he swelled with pride when at house meetings the people pointed to him and said, "There's little Willie the preacher!" He wondered many times, though, what he would have to preach about. Preachers certainly inspired his awe. One night in a meeting he drew the evangelist delivering his sermon. Somebody took the sketch from him and handed it to the evangelist, and Bill sat in terror waiting to be condemned to the pit for such impiety! But the man had a Christian attitude and only commented favorably on his drawing. He forever loved Brother Coseman after that.

Just before he was ten, his older sisters went to a revival meeting in a skating rink about fifty miles away. A lady called Mattie Crawford was conducting it; many had repented, and a great stir was made throughout the area. When his parents heard about the meeting they were concerned—especially his mother. He overheard them talking in their bedroom:

“Well, John, we have brought up our children, and hopefully they will not be led away with the error of the devil,” Mother commented.

“We can’t say it is of the devil or not,” Father replied.

“Anything that is not truth as we have learned it, through the knowledge of the Word of God, cannot be of God!” Mama responded vehemently.

Bill turned over in his cold bed, a thousand fearful thoughts running through his mind. Finally he dropped off into a fitful sleep, anxiously hoping that he would never run up against anybody who was of the devil!

The Go sect had selected a small mountain knoll on their farm for a cemetery. There a number of Bill’s best-loved friends of youth would be buried. There too, before he was eleven years old, they buried his father, forcing Bill to become the breadwinner for the household.

He took his father’s death hard. Something within him said he would never see his father again. Many times he would sit on the grave that held its prisoner, looking up to heaven where Mum said his dad was, to ask the Lord God why could he not speak to his father anymore, and wondering: Why, why should these things be?

Soon afterwards he was out picking potatoes to help things along. Here he heard about Pentecostal people but shunned asking questions concerning them. He remembered the earlier conversation of his parents that branded these people as being “of the devil.” A few years later, when he was fifteen, he went out working on the public highway. Some of the road workers were very kind to him, and this set him thinking. How can these people be kind when they

are not believers like my mother? he wondered.

“You ought to be very proud of your mother; she is a wonderful, good Christian woman,” the boss said one day. Bill thought so too: many mornings he would awaken to the voice of his mother praying for her little fatherless family.

Then another stir came, similar to the one five years earlier. A group of people were preaching the gospel and holding what they called Bible meetings, speaking a lot about the Holy Ghost. Strangely, an older friend of his, Bless, joined them. A tall, powerful man, Bless was the champion boxer of all around. Bill often went to his house to hear the stories he told, for they ran the gamut from sex to hunting—all things a young man finds interesting. It never bothered him too much that Bless had a sinister side, and when once in a while he got drunk and seemed unhappy, well, Bill had thought it only natural that a man should have some problems. But one day people said Bless had gone to the altar and was changed. Gone to the altar? Not knowing what that meant, Bill listened to the comments of folk around. Bless was changed all right, they affirmed. Bill was intrigued, wondering what this change was. Would he not recognize Bless anymore? Curiosity got the better of him, so he went around to his house. What a surprise when he found Bless on his knees praying with his wife and two little girls! That too made Bill think—still, no matter what Bless got, *he* was not going to get it . . . he was not going to have any truck with these people . . . these devils! Yet he could not get Bless off his mind. There he had stood, tall and serene with a glow that seemed to give off rays—almost as if he had an inward halo.

Bill’s mother was furious when she learned he had been around there. “Never talk to him again,” she warned, after cagily questioning him and confiding that the “Go” people once had hopes for Bless to join them.

Going to the post office on his bicycle one night, he was surprised to see a large crowd gathered about the place where the Bible meeting was being held. People were even standing on top of their cars to look in through the windows. It all seemed so strange that Bill went right on up to the front door.

“Don’t go in there; they’ll get you!” called out some of the boys he knew who had also gathered outside. Thinking they were mocking him, Bill pressed on into the meeting hall. To his further surprise he saw seven different ministers, male and female, on the platform. The meeting progressed. He marveled at the testimonies the people gave, and although their singing was different, he liked it. People shouted things spontaneously like, “Glory to God! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!” The devil didn’t seem to have any show in the meeting at all! Well, this is something Mum doesn’t know about, because I never once heard them mention the devil, Bill thought. But the tapping of feet and clapping of hands seemed out of order to him.

He told his mother he had been to the meeting. She was stunned. Had he slapped her across the face with a cold, clammy cod she could not have been more surprised or upset.

“Oh, Willie! Surely you didn’t go in there!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, but Mum! I don’t think you understand—there was nothing said about the devil at all. All I heard was just how they were praising the Lord, and it was all very nice!”

She was unmoved by his reply and, looking at him determinedly, said: “If you ever go back there it will be over my dead body! I now forbid you to go, and I never want to hear you mention those Holy Rollers again! You know they are of the devil—they have deceived you.”

He was surprised by what his mother said and the intensity with which she said it, and went up to bed perplexed. Crawling slowly under the covers, he tried to be honest before himself and God. Well, maybe I did get deceived, he thought. I haven’t heard all those things before, so perhaps there was something that was not right. Putting his Bible on his bed, with tears streaming down his eyes he prayed, “O God, show me what to do. If these people are of the devil, they should be told. Lord, whatever Scripture you give me it will help me, and I am going to put my hand on a Scripture.” He dropped his finger on the open Bible. When his eyes had cleared enough he read the verse above his finger. It was Psalm 47:

“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of

triumph.”

He'd never known that verse was in the Bible before! “O God, that's just what those people were doing—at least they clapped their hands,” he said. Bill was as stunned as a whipped dog. He didn't really know what it all meant and tried to balance everything in his mind. Eventually he became too tired and confused to think and went fast asleep. But he was soon awakened by a very vivid dream. He saw Jesus come out of glory in a sky ablaze with beautiful light. Everywhere seemed to be charged with wonder. As he looked up he saw faces of people he recognized. They were going up, one by one, to meet Jesus in the air—and they were the people he had seen in the service the night before! As they rose from the ground, their expressions were filled with the greatest joy and satisfaction. . . .

“O God, take me. *Take me!*” he cried at the top of his voice. Instantly he was awake and jumped out from his bed. Hearing a movement in the kitchen, he quickly made his way downstairs.

“Mum, I want to talk to you!” he said excitedly. “Do you believe Jesus Christ is going to come in the clouds from heaven?”

His mother looked at him earnestly. “My dear son, the coming of the Lord is only when death comes and takes us—that is what His coming is.”

Bill wasn't satisfied. “Well, tell me about it . . . please tell me more about it. I've had a dream . . . I think.”

Mother put her arms around him while the tears streamed from his eyes, dropping upon her hands. “Poor Willie, you've been deceived. This is just the devil. Try to forget about it,” she said tenderly. “Now please go back to bed and try to get some sleep.”

Completely baffled, Bill returned to bed, where he lay thinking about all the conflicting messages. In the morning, before going out to work, his mother warned him again not to talk to those “Holy Roller” people who were working around him.

“Don't worry, Mum,” he replied. “I won't say anything to them.”

That day one of the fellows, a thin, mean man, came up to him. Spitting out his tobacco he laughed, saying he guessed Bill had been at the meeting last night.

“Oh, just for a few minutes.”

“Do you know something? When I went home last night my wife was lying on the floor with her hands up towards heaven. She was speaking in tongues.”

“What? What’s that?” Bill asked, puzzled.

“That is what *they* call the power, the—the baptism of the Holy Ghost,” he said, still laughing. Bill remembered them talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and now he could hardly work, not knowing what to think of the week’s events. He was torn between two opinions: doubts and disillusionment were growing over his mother’s position, but he was unable to make up his mind against it. Sunday came and he decided to go to church again but told his mother he was going to see his sister. Taking his bicycle, he rode seventeen miles through the countryside to the Sunday afternoon meeting. Crowds of people were there, some standing for lack of seats. While the people stood up to sing, he squeezed his way forward to get a better view. He was captivated when the preacher wound up to his message, not only hearing but also feeling what the man was saying. Finally the preacher concluded, and while he invited people to come forward if they wanted the Lord, the congregation sang:

Hear the blessed Savior, calling the oppressed, “O, ye the heavy laden, come to Me and rest. Come, no longer tarry; I your load will bear. Bring Me every burden, bring Me every care.”

Waves of emotion swept the audience. He saw people go forward and kneel at the altar, some with tears streaming down their faces. Bill didn’t really understand it all, but he did know what he felt. He knew that he needed to do something . . . he needed to come to Jesus. He felt himself going forward, and he knelt in a little place between other people at the altar. Then he prayed fervently:

“Lord, Lord, if You save me I don’t care what happens. I want to be

ready for Your coming, and whatever You want me to do I will do it, Lord.” Having said this, he noticed that people around him were praying differently from him. They were praising the Lord. He didn’t know how to praise the Lord—in fact, he did not know what else he was now supposed to say.

Then a lady he knew, who had been in the Salvation Army, came over and put her hand on his head. “Lord,” she prayed, “help this boy to believe what You have done for him on Calvary.”

At that moment something gripped him, an inner realization of the things the woman had said. His faith reached out and took the words, pulling them into his experience, clinging to them, savoring the reality of them. Immediately he felt a lightening, a freedom, a liberation from the heaviness and confusion and conviction that had been pressing on him and that had reached a climax during the preacher’s sermon. The words “what You have done” kept coming to him, and he kept savoring them while it seemed that layer after layer of anxiety drained away. Very simply, when all these things had settled within him, and he felt completely changed, he thanked Jesus for what He had done.

Bill rose to go out into the sunlit afternoon. As he was going, one of the boys called to him, asking him to come back to the evening meeting.

“Oh, I can’t; my mother won’t let me!” he shouted back.

“Don’t worry about your mother—don’t you know you’ll get the Holy Ghost and speak in tongues and scare your mother half to death!” the boy replied.

Looking intently at the boy he thought, How terrible that would be to have something you scared people half to death with! However, he went home and didn’t say a word to his mother, going to bed very early to avoid her scrutiny. Coming back from work the following day, he tried to be as cheerful and natural as possible. Mum looked sad.

“Did you go to the meeting yesterday afternoon?” she asked.

“Yes, I did,” he said, low-key and matter-of-factly. He wasn’t prepared for the next move. Swift as a cat, she grabbed the broomstick and started flaying him with a passion, as if she were trying to beat the devil out of him and knew it was the last opportunity. He tried to protect himself as best as he could, burying his head in his arms. She went on thrashing him, beating him around the floor to which he had now fallen.

“Stop it, Mum!” his sister screamed, having come into the room to see the commotion. “You’re going to kill him!”

“I’d rather him be dead than with those Holy Rollers!” his mother screamed back. But finally she did stop beating him.

Smarting and sore, he went up to bed. From that night on, his mother kept him from reading the Bible, so he took it to bed and read it under the cover by flashlight.

October came, then November, then December. He had read through the New Testament seventeen times, and each time he saw something new. It seemed to become better each time he read it, and he grew to love it more and more. It was alive to him. When he read it the verses jumped out, toppled over and over in his mind, knit themselves together, grew into beautiful ideas, grew in form and meaning until the words became to him the Word. It was a narcotic, and he was addicted.

By now it was the end of December. A neighborhood Pentecostal woman smuggled a few notes in to him, telling how the Holy Ghost was being poured out and what wonderful things were happening. She didn’t mention a word about tongues—had she done so, he would have torn up the note. Bill had been praying to the Lord to fill him with the Holy Ghost—but not let him speak in tongues. While he was praying under the pine trees in the cold snow, a voice said to him: “Go to the meeting tonight.” He was surprised, because it was New Year’s Eve and he did not know there was a meeting. He went inside to tell his mother of his intention.

“Over my dead body!” she threatened.

Grabbing his coat, he dashed out of the house, jumped over the

garden gate, and ran. His mother kept calling after him until neighbors told her to leave him alone, saying he wouldn't come to any harm. When out of sight, Bill slowed his pace and then walked on through the beautiful snow-covered landscape to the service, kept warm by the excitement of previous events and anticipation of what the meeting would have in store.

He listened carefully to every word the preacher said. The preacher didn't say anything new, but what he did say Bill saw in a new light. His text was, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." He then concluded by asking those people who "wanted the promise of the Father" to come to the front. Bill went forward with others, and many people gathered around the seekers. Prayer began, but he was uncomfortable. The people around him seemed to want to touch him somewhere: they prayed over him; they messed his hair; they put their hands on his head, on his shoulder, on his back; they patted him and tapped him until he was absolutely exhausted and angry. He stood up and looked round at the people.

"Mum said you lot were crazy, and now I know that you are crazy! I don't want any more of this—I'm going!" he said.

Taking his coat he made his way to the back, but the pastor stopped him at the door. "Son, where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going back home and I won't be here again!" Bill replied.

"But don't you want the Holy Ghost?"

"Well, . . . yes!"

"Those people were only trying to help you. . . ."

"Help me? They were tearing me to pieces!" he cut in. "Don't you know what they just did? They pushed me. They spit on me. They stood over me and hollered! I told them they were crazy—and I don't want any of it any more!"

"But you know they were only trying to help you," the pastor

continued. “You should appreciate that. If you go back and pray I will not let any of them near you.” Waiting for the boy to respond, the pastor prayed within.

Bill softened. Eventually he said, “All right, but don’t let any of them touch me!”

He went back and knelt in prayer, bringing his thoughts again to the words, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you.” The words became more meaningful to him, bigger, brighter. . . . He began to feel a cloud of love and power come upon him . . . envelop him . . . enter into him. He became suffused with it—one with it. The warmth, the intoxicating joy, the Presence, welled up within him, taking charge of him and freeing him at the same time. Higher and higher it came—now from deep within his being—into his belly, his throat, his head, his tongue! And from the tongue flowed a beautiful river of phrases he had never voiced before. Words rejoicing, words powerful, words victorious—they bubbled, they flowed, they gushed forth in torrents he could not stop—and wouldn’t want to. Though he did not know the meaning of the words, he knew the feeling of them: they felt like primeval words, words of creation, God’s words! And they were wonderful. But for him they were too precious, too hallowed, to be shouted. If he could not control the flow, he could the volume. He whispered in tongues. Caught away in the Presence, lost in eternity, he whispered the words on and on.

Coming back into time, he was amazed to find it was four A.M. Still there were people, some of the same people he had called crazy, praying beside him. Now he knew what they felt and what they had been so anxious for him to have, and he loved them. But he had to go. He found his way home almost by instinct, still light with the Spirit’s intoxication. As he went up the hill, he expected his mother would be in bed and was surprised to see a light burning in the kitchen. Peeping in through the frost-stained window, he saw his mother sitting there, knitting, with a resolute look on her face. What shall I say to her? he thought. Walking into the room he tried to be nonchalant.

“Where have you been till this hour of the morning?” she demanded coldly.

He began to feel the Presence well up again within him and realized it had come to abide.

“Mum, I was at the meeting.”

His mother paled a bit but quickly regained her poise. “And what went on there that would bring a boy of your age home at an hour like this?” she said with more considered coldness.

“Mum, it was wonderful!” Bill responded boldly.

“What was wonderful?” she asked still coldly, but emphasizing the “what” and fighting to control her growing unease.

If she was going to say something else she never got the chance. Bill felt the glory of God welling within him. He lifted his hands to heaven . . . and began to speak in tongues! His mother’s eyes widened, her mouth opened and dropped at the same time, while her arms fell to her sides. She stared at him in bewilderment, scared half to death and unable to speak—just as the boy had said!

Later she recovered her posture, chiding and insulting him and rehearsing all the faults of the Pentecostal people around, but never again, even when Brother Steeves took him down to the river at Newcastle Bridge and baptized him in Jesus’ name, did she try to stand in his way. He began to learn that you just can’t hide it when the Spirit is working within you. Best of all, he knew assuredly that the devil had not got him!



Bill when his father died.
He was 10 then.



Bill, age 15, with his sisters.

CHAPTER Three

G49155 Drost

Like many who have recently “seen the light,” Bill became fired with the spirit of evangelism, and like many who have become fired with the spirit of evangelism, Bill soon found that not everybody wanted to listen when he tried to share the light. But undaunted by stern rebukes and rebuffs he persevered, anxious for people to come to know Jesus. He wore a path through the pine trees to a little place where he would pray. There he felt God very near and very real. At church he sat on the front pew so that nothing would distract him. With a piece of chalk he wrote on trees and in public places something about the love of God or the text “Ye must be born again,” which was his favorite.

Shortly after Bill was baptized with the Holy Spirit, the people started a Sunday school. At fifteen years of age he was thrilled that, at last, he could go to a regular Sunday school. A meeting was called to choose teachers, and a slight, gray-haired old lady called Mother Clark impressed them all when she said the ones praying hardest for teachers should probably be the teachers themselves. Soon each group had a teacher, except the boys of the eleven-to-fourteen age group. This outstanding need was mentioned to Mother Clark. Spryly she stood to her feet, turned, pointed a thin finger towards Bill, and said with an air of final authority, “If I am not mistaken, this freckle-faced young man is the one. I have noticed the way he talks to young men and tries to get them interested.”

Bill shivered like a fiddler’s elbow—he had never even *been* to a Sunday school, let alone teach one. But it was decided that he should indeed teach the boys’ class. The following Sunday he assembled the seven boys, none of them knowing what to do. Finally, Bill said to the boys, “I promise that every morning I will pray for each of you, and in that way God will meet with us, and we’ll receive something from Him.”

The work began to grow, and it wasn’t long until they opened

another Sunday school in Newcastle Bridge. There he met a big challenge: Tommy, a young tough, had been forced to go to Sunday school by his parents and bitterly resented it. If Tom could not countermand his parents, he could at least show his disgust. He kept his sullen face below a cap, which he adamantly refused to remove. He made it plain that he was completely fed up and would cooperate in no way whatsoever.

After much prayerful thought, Bill decided he would take Tommy out one Saturday for a canoe ride and an ice cream—an expensive treat in those days. Tom accepted the offer, and they had a hilarious time when they discovered, trying to get back upstream, that neither of them had been canoeing before. Then Bill was surprised to find more money in his pocket than he expected, and they were able to have hamburgers as well as ice cream. Before leaving, he asked Tommy if he would be at church tomorrow. (Sometimes he slipped away, notwithstanding his parents' protests.)

“Sure, I’ll be there,” Tom replied.

The next morning he walked Tom, who took off his cap to reveal a bright and open face. Shortly afterwards he repented and began to serve the Lord. With some people a little kindness went a long way, Bill found. Kindness was second nature to him, and in the cover of his Bible he would later write:

I have wept in the night

For the shortness of sight

That to others' needs makes me blind.

But I have never yet

Learned time to regret

For being a little too kind.

Like other revival movements before them, the Pentecostal churches continued to expand, strengthen, and organize. Bill became young people's leader in the Maritimes and later in Ontario. Much of the time he worked in mines, devoting his free time to the church,

which was his joy. One day he was overwhelmed by the conviction that he should be a missionary to Colombia. He went and spoke to Brother Stairs, a preacher fifteen years his senior who was destined to become Bill's closest friend. Brother Stairs looked at the freckle-faced boy in front of him, hair close cropped, trousers half-mast. The lad didn't look much of a missionary, but his earnestness made an indelible impression on his mind. Only when Bill joined the army did Brother Stairs doubt the calling—for he doubted Bill would return alive.

In the summer of 1937 Bill learned a bitter lesson. While working at the mines at Coal Creek he lived at a boardinghouse in Chipman, run by Mrs. Darrah. A young fellow who worked in the bank, Bill Jones, also stayed there. Bill spoke to him many times about the Lord, and one night the young man surprised him by saying he would like to go with him to church. Bill thought for a moment: it was a weeknight service, the crowd would be thin, and the speaker was not eloquent. Maybe he would not only be unimpressed but also put off from returning.

"Well, I'd like to take you tonight, but the service will be so much better on Sunday. What about if I call by and pick you up then, OK?" he asked. It was, and Bill made a mental note to be back (he was going home that weekend) early enough to collect him.

As he approached the boardinghouse on Sunday afternoon, it seemed quiet and strange. Unable to find the other boarder, he knocked on Mrs. Darrah's door, asking her his whereabouts.

She looked sad. "Haven't you heard? Bill went out in a canoe since you were here, with Len White, and somehow the canoe toppled, and Bill was drowned."

Bill broke down weeping. "Oh no! O God forgive me! I should have taken him to church with me when he wanted to go! . . . Now it's too late. O God forgive me!" After that, he resolved never to miss an opportunity to speak about Jesus to everybody he came in contact with.

By the beginning of the Second World War, Bill had moved to the city of St. John to help with the church, at the same time working

in the dry dock. Men in uniform began to be a common sight, and somehow Bill felt especially drawn to them. He would often give them literature and try to talk with them. As he rattled along one day on one of the noisy but powerless old trams, his attention was arrested by two soldiers. Bill went to give them a tract.

One of them looked at Bill carefully. "It's all right for you; you're a civilian. You ought to come in the army, if you want to prove yourself to be a Christian!" he said stoutly.

The words struck a chord, and Bill couldn't get them off his mind. Perhaps it is true that if I went in the army I would have contact with a lot of boys, he thought. Before the tram had got him to his destination, he had decided to enlist.

At the home of Brother and Sister Morrow, where he was staying, he announced his intention of joining the army. The Morrows were a prayerful and saintly old couple, and on hearing this news they retired from the table immediately to pray. After a time they came from their room. "Son, if you want to please God and go in the army, well, that will be fine," they pronounced.

The following morning Bill took the train to Fredericton, went to the army depot, and signed on as a Canadian soldier. He was given a uniform and left to himself, so he donned it as best he could, laughing when he got in a tangle with the gear. Eventually he resembled the boys he had seen and went for a stroll downtown. A general could not have felt more important. Bill walked down the street with eyes left, looking in the storefront windows—not at the merchandise, but at the reflection of the dapper young soldier strutting down the street. So engrossed in the reflection was he that he bumped into somebody.

"Excuse me!" said Bill, startled.

"Just a minute, young fellow!" said the stranger, who was wearing a uniform.

"Oh, I'm sorry; what have I done?" asked Bill.

"Are you a soldier?"

“Yes,” replied Bill.

“Well, don’t you know that I am senior officer, and that you should salute a senior officer if you are a soldier? How long have you been a soldier?”

“About five hours, I guess,” said Bill.

The senior officer gave the young fellow a crash course in military etiquette. “Well, you ought to salute like this,” he said, showing Bill how.

Bill copied him and, pleased to be instructed, said sincerely, “Thanks for showing me!”

“You should say, ‘Thank you, sir!’” added the officer.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I’ll try to remember that next time!” said Bill.

The senior officer thought about adding “sir” for him but on reflection decided not to bother. He had given enough private tutoring and would in future leave it to the sergeants.

About five hundred raw recruits gathered in class each day. Inevitably the instructor got onto the subject of killing the enemy. This aspect of army life had not really crossed Bill’s mind before, and his thoughts drifted from the drone of the officer’s voice. He found himself thinking: Kill a man—how could I kill a man? The Spirit of God came on him, and like Sarah of old he began to laugh at the news he had received. Suddenly things seemed to fall more quiet around the lecture hall; he became conscious of his surroundings and of his own laughter, which spluttered to a halt with the increasing awareness. An awesome silence now hung over the lecture hall. The instructor, angry and red faced, was looking in his direction. Bill didn’t know it, but so was everybody else.

“You down there, do you think I’m a fool?” barked the officer.

Bill was not sure whether he or somebody else was being addressed. He gave himself the benefit of the doubt.

“Stand up!” the officer bellowed, glowering at him. Bill concluded

that he indeed was the person being addressed. He stood up.

“Go and run around this building seven times, and when you come back maybe you can tell us what you were laughing at.” Out he went and trotted seven times around the building. Then, puffing and panting, he came and resumed his seat.

“Stand up!” barked the instructor at him again. Again, he stood up.

“Now, what did you find so amusing?” queried the officer.

“I want to tell you that God spoke to me,” Bill began. If any of the fellows were not following the proceedings before, they were now. Five hundred heads were turned to see the screwball who claimed God spoke to him! “God told me that I would never kill a man,” Bill went on, “and it was so good and so real to me that it caused my innermost soul to rejoice and laugh. I beg your pardon, sir, but I believe that God will never lead me to a position where I have to come face to face and kill a man!”

The instructing officer prided himself in his knowledge of men and his ability as a disciplinarian. He thought that he had met just about every overt and covert challenge to his authority and that he knew how to handle just about any situation. But he was shaken by this reply—the man seemed so sincere. These men were all volunteers, though, so why should he be saddled with any religious nuts? Maybe he was an actor. Hostile at the reply and angered by his inability to quite comprehend the situation, he demanded Bill’s name and number.

“G49155 Drost, W. F.” Bill answered.

“Report for duty tonight after 6 P.M.”

That’s a bit tough, thought Bill. He had been planning to go to church. Reporting for duty that night, he was given two pails of water and told to scrub out the dining room and the huts. After four hours of sweating on his knees, he had finished it all. An officer came to inspect the work.

“You call this clean?” said the officer, giving it a cursory glance.

“Yes, sir, that is about as clean as anybody can get it!” replied Bill brightly. The captain, with slow and deliberate movements, kicked the two pails of dirty water over the clean floor.

“Clean this building!” he bellowed. “You’re in here to work, not to fool around!” Bill shrugged his shoulders. There was no point in refusing. There was nothing for him to do but to refill the pails and start all over again. Around midnight he had given it all a second going over and dropped exhausted onto his bed to sleep.

In the morning he received a lecture and was told that he had been chastened and disciplined for making fun of army rules. This was not true, but Bill knew that there was no point protesting. Just to make their point clear, the authorities confined him to camp for a couple of weeks.

When he was allowed out again, he headed for church as joyfully as a sailor on shore leave heads for the bright lights. During the service an announcement was made: Special revival meetings were going to be held every night, and a special preacher was going to come to preach. After the service, the pastor, Brother Jacques, came down to speak to Bill.

“Praise the Lord, Bill! Listen, I want you to be here every night and help in every way you can.”

“Thanks,” replied Bill. “I’ll be here every night faithfully.” He hoped that nothing would occur to confine him to camp again. He didn’t want to be scrubbing floors when, with the angels, he could be in church rejoicing over “a sinner that repenteth.”

At noon the following day, eating in the dining hut, he went to swallow when a sharp pain jabbed in his throat. He had difficulty breathing; his face went white; and, unable to sit up, he lay down on the table. Some of the men picked Bill up and carried him to the medical officer’s room nearby.

The doctor examined him. “There’s some obstruction in your throat. We’ll have to put you into the hospital,” he said in the matter-of-fact way that military doctors have.

The “hospital” turned out to be a private home that the army was using for this purpose. The men carried him to the third floor and put him into bed. The room was quite small, and he was the only one in it. After further examination, the doctor found that he had swallowed a chicken bone and told him he would be confined to the hospital for ten days at least. Bill was disappointed—it looked as if he would not get to the meetings after all—but remembering that the Bible says to give thanks for everything, he just praised the Lord.

On one side of the room was a window overlooking the street. Bill thought wistfully about the people going to church that night and about his promise to Brother Jacques to be there faithfully. Then, after a while, he noticed that his throat felt clear.

He called to the nurse. “Hey, nurse! My throat seems to be OK now. Do you think I can go?”

“Not for ten days you can’t,” she said jauntily without bothering to examine him. “But I’ll tell the doctor, and he can look at you in the morning.” She went out, closing the door behind her.

There was another door on the far side of the room. Bill thought he would see where it led, so he got out of bed and went over to it. He found a small room filled with his clothes and belongings. There was a window, and looking out he saw that it led onto a fire escape, which went to the street below. The thought struck him that he could escape to the meeting through there. But what if somebody looked in and found him gone? He resolved to go out, and he made up the bed as though somebody were sleeping in it. If they just glanced through the door, there was a chance that he would not be caught.

A few minutes before seven he got dressed and slipped through the little room and down the fire escape, onto the street. At 7:30 he was in church. Getting into the spirit of the meeting, he soon stopped worrying about what would happen should he be detected. Had Bill been on regular army routine he should have been back by 10:30, but being out as he was it didn’t matter if he were out till dawn, so he stayed to the end. By the time he crawled back up the fire escape it was near midnight. Examining the room and bed he found that

nobody seemed to have been in there, and he slept soundly all night.

The next day he was called to be examined. "Well, Drost," the medical officer said after examining him, "I don't find anything in your throat now, but just the same you won't mind staying in here and not returning to camp for ten days, will you? The food is better here anyway!"

"No, sir!" said Bill smiling. He thanked the doctor, saluted, and went back to his room. There he enjoyed himself reading the Bible. At seven he was dressed and again slid down onto the street in time to go to church. Thus he was able to get to the ten nights of meetings and stay until it was time to go.

Some time after getting out of the hospital Bill was on his way to a meeting one night when a man called over to him and said, "Brother Drost, my brother is in hospital. Can you come and see him?" Bill knew the man's brother, having once worked for him. The man in question had not been too kind to him merely because he was a Pentecostal. Nevertheless he agreed to go.

In the hospital room the smell of disinfectant and antiseptic could not quite disguise the sweet and sickly smell of decay. The patient lay drawn and hollow-cheeked, and in a rubber sack beside his bed were part of his intestines. The doctor had given him about six weeks to live. It was a pitiful sight.

"Bill, I'm glad you've come," said the man weakly and went on to recall how he had been very mean to him. Very sincerely he said that he was sorry and asked Bill to pray for him.

Bill did not quite know what to say. Under his breath he said a quick prayer. Then he felt emphatically to read a portion of Scripture: "Let not your heart be troubled. . . ." As he read it, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the room was very real.

The man gave a groan and cried in anguish, "Pray to God that He gives me time to repent and get baptized, Bill!" Feeling that God was working real repentance, Bill prayed.

A day or so after praying for the man, Bill and the other troops were sent to Petawawa, Ontario, for further training. Bill learned later that within two months the man died, but within two months he had also been filled with the Holy Spirit and spoken in tongues. Then, as he desired to be baptized, others had carried him to the river and baptized him in the name of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER Four

Advanced Training

On learning that his unit was to be sent to Petawawa, Bill felt an apprehension come over him when he began to think about leaving behind the fellowship of his friends in the Fredericton church. It was one of those apprehensions that migrants get as they are about to embark—when the realization of what they are doing really hits them, and memories of all the good times in the land they are leaving come flooding in.

Lying in his bed, he began to take stock of the months that had passed by, and the thought came to him: Yes, you have been with some good people, but you have had some pretty rough times from people who were not Christians. You didn't hide your light—you let it shine—but has it been of any value just to stand up and tell people that they need to get saved? When you were asked to join in the gambling or the drinking you instantly said, "Oh no! That's not my line: I know Jesus Christ." Sometimes they sneered or laughed, or called you "Deacon" or "Preacher" or other things not so nice. Was it the right approach you used? Could you have gone about it differently? After thinking it over for a long time, Bill decided to try a new approach in the next camp, provided he was billeted with people who did not know him.

He was still thinking along the same lines as the train bumped its way deeper into Ontario the following morning. The guys around him were telling their usual stories with their usual expletives, and Bill just sat there quietly, meditating.

One of the boys turned to him: "Well, Drost, do you think you're going to be as happy as you've claimed to be?"

"Oh, yes, I will be happy; there is no doubt about that. I know what Jesus has done in my life," replied Bill. He didn't feel very happy at that moment, though, but by faith knew everything would be fine.

On and on the train rattled, past small towns and sleepy hamlets tranquil in their isolation, taking him where he had never been

before. As they reached Petawawa, the sun's long rays turned the distant eastern hills purple, and a certain peacefulness filled the evening air. But there was to be no peace for them that night. It was such a big hustle to get everybody and the equipment into the waiting trucks that deep darkness had fallen by the time they reached camp, only a mile or two down the road. They were put through the "name, rank and religion, if any" routine before being allocated to barracks. Usually Bill replied to the religion question with a testimony about having the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues, but now he made the low-key response he had decided upon. Yet they were not allowed to go to bed but were given a pep talk about conducting themselves "in a manner such as would not cause anybody any problems" and were told the camp rules. "I'm not under law but grace," said Bill to himself after hearing the dreary list of regulations, "but while I'm in the flesh I have to put up with all this!"

Finally they were allowed to go to their billets, each having been allocated according to his initial, and he found himself with a top bunk. Most of the men were tired from the trip and were dropping straight off. Bill too was exhausted, feeling almost as fatigued as the day he was beaten with his mother's broom. He hesitated. Normally he would have knelt and prayed before retiring, but he was thinking about his new strategy. There was not a person in the room who knew him, so he decided to pray while lying on his bed. He did not think the Lord would condemn him for so praying, provided he was not ashamed of praying otherwise. Turning on his face he prayed: "Lord, here I am—I am in Your hands. I don't want to be ashamed but do not want to bring on anything to disgrace Your work. Help me serve You in the best way possible."

Soon the lights were out, and Bill dropped into sleep thinking about the new faces around him and how he would try to answer their questions when they came. The next thing he knew he was awake and the lights were on. Strangely, he was not in his bed. Slowly it dawned on him . . . he was walking up and down in the middle of the room with his hands raised, speaking in tongues and shouting things like, "Hallelujah," "Glory to God," and "I'm glad I belong to Jesus!" in front of a bewildered audience of soldiers. Before he could collect himself, some officers came in to see the commotion

and called him to attention. He felt daft standing to attention half undressed. He felt daft anyway.

“What’s going on here? Have you had a nightmare?” they queried.

“Oh no, sir! Not a nightmare—a Holy Ghost mare!” Bill replied, having realized what had happened. The officers, too, were bewildered. Bill went on to explain as clearly as possible that Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit, which he had received. This made God very real to him and caused him to speak in tongues, which was like rivers of living water coming out of his innermost being. This, he continued, was just God’s way of bringing it out into the open. He realized now that he had been wrong and should have spoken about it earlier when asked to state his religion. Somewhat surprisingly, the officer he answered seemed satisfied with his explanation and merely ordered lights out and everybody back to their beds.

“Well, you have really made a fool of yourself now!” Bill said to himself in an Oliver Hardy manner and couldn’t sleep all night long. Dawn finally came, so he got up and self-consciously got ready for breakfast. It seemed he was the object of the restrained curiosity and polite humoring that people retain for those they suspect (and fear) of being half-mad—the “don’t provoke them, they’re as strong as ten men” treatment—or perhaps his imagination was playing tricks.

Still feeling foolish, he filed in for breakfast, took a half-hearted helping, and not wanting to make anybody feel ill at ease, found himself an empty table. Three fellows came up and asked to sit next to him. “Sure” he replied, and they sat down, one either side and one opposite him.

“Hey, I like what you did last night; it was great!” said one.

Oh no! thought Bill, I wonder what’s coming now? He said nothing but braced himself for trouble.

The soldier went on, not noticing his reaction. “You know, my mother is Pentecostal, and I’m going to write and tell her I’ve found a Pentecostal friend!”

Bill breathed a sigh of relief. Obviously they were genuine, and he began to feel happy about the night's events. He stretched his arm across the table and shook hands with this enthusiastic, fresh-faced soldier. "Praise the Lord!" Bill said joyfully.

"Praise the Lord!" the three said, shaking hands in turn.

After a friendly conversation and making arrangements to meet again, the boys told him a way to get to the Pentecostal church in Pembroke. It appeared that once you had visited the camp church on Sunday morning, you were free. To get to Pembroke in time, you had to go to the early morning Catholic service. Bill thanked them, making a note to attend what would be his first Catholic service. It wasn't long before he had new friends and good fellowship in Pembroke. Some of the people he found there would remain friends the rest of his life.

One Saturday, after having cleaned up the camp for a coming inspection, they were given time off. All the boys had gone into town, but Bill never did like pounding the streets much. Knowing the shooting range would be deserted, he went there to pray and worship the Lord. While he was praying, the Lord told him to go to the hospital in Pembroke. Bill didn't know there was a hospital in Pembroke, but since it was a big city he was not surprised to learn of one being there. Under compulsion from the Spirit he went back to his quarters to change into his dress uniform.

Then, just as he stepped out of the door, an officer driving by in a jeep stopped and spoke to him. "I thought all the boys were out."

"Yes, sir, I guess most of them are."

"Are you going out?"

"Well, yes I am."

"Jump in then!" Bill jumped in beside the officer. "It's strange to find you here alone at this hour of the day. What have you been doing?" asked the captain.

"Oh, I was just back there on the shooting range."

“What were you doing back there?”

“Well, I wasn’t shooting, but you see, sir, I enjoy being alone in prayer to God.”

“You enjoy *what*?”

“I enjoy being alone in prayer to God. While I was praying back there I felt impressed to go to the hospital,” he continued, matter-of-factly.

“Do you know anybody at the hospital?” asked the officer, intrigued.

“No, sir.” They had now reached the outside gate. He tapped the captain on the arm, “Excuse me, sir, but since I was not planning to go out I didn’t collect a pass.”

“Don’t worry, you’re with an officer. Just sit still and be calm.” The guards saluted and let them through without a challenge. The captain drove on in reflective silence, right to the hospital front door. “You told me you wanted the hospital. This is it!” he said, nodding towards the door.

“Yes, thank you, sir.” The jeep pulled away and left him standing at the front entrance. For a few seconds Bill lifted up his heart to the Lord with a silent prayer: “Lord, I don’t think You are any fool and You don’t want to make a fool of me either. I believe the Spirit has taken me here, and so if there is somebody I can help I am happy to do so.” Looking straight ahead he then walked to the reception desk. There was a young nurse on duty. She was a pretty redhead, but Bill was too preoccupied to notice.

“Yes?” she queried.

“I would like to visit,” said Bill, a little unsure of himself.

“Do you know some people here?”

“Well, I would like to visit,” he returned, unable to find the proper words.

“Well, who would you like to visit?” the nurse persisted, a little amused.

“Well, I think I would like to visit . . . there must be some boys in this hospital . . . I am a Sunday school teacher and would like to visit the boys,” said Bill boldly with a final flash of inspiration.

“Well, that will be fine,” the nurse responded graciously, feeling a little guilty for having enjoyed his embarrassment. She called over a Miss Johnson, who beckoned him to the elevator. They rode up to the third floor in silence. Miss Johnson led him briskly across the brightly painted corridor into a room full of little boys. Turning to him she announced pertly, “Boys, this man is a soldier and he is a Sunday school teacher. He thought he would like to visit you. I’m sure you will enjoy what he has to say!” After saying goodbye to Bill she walked out.

Looking around the room, he saw about fifteen small beds. When he tried to say something, he found himself so tongue-tied that all he could do was back out of the room into the corridor. He looked about, wondering, and noticed a door that had a “No Visitors Allowed” notice on it. This seemed to be the place he was drawn towards, and he made his way over. Just before he reached it, a nurse stepped out of the elevator, saw where he was heading, and told him he couldn’t go in that room because it was such a serious case. Bill got into the elevator and pressed a button, giving the nurse time to disappear. He returned to the floor and walked quietly over to the door.

It was open a fraction, and somebody inside was sobbing heavily. He pushed the door open an inch or two. On the bed, lying very still, was a small body bandaged from head to toe, with only a patch of forehead visible and slits for the eyes. Judging from the size, Bill thought it must be a boy around fourteen. His eyes went down the bed to the sound of the sobbing. Kneeling at the foot was a lady—obviously the boy’s mother—who cried convulsively as she made her desperate prayers. The bedclothes at the bottom were knotted from her small, white fists working out her agony on them. He was moved with compassion for her and, pushing open the door, tiptoed over.

“Lady, my dear woman, can I help you?” he said tenderly, touching her on the shoulder.

She looked up at Bill, startled, then asked, ““Oh, are you Pentecostal?”

“Yes, I am.”

“I have been praying that the Lord would send someone to pray for my boy.” She was trying to recover herself. “He has been in a terrible accident. . . . There is no hope for him. . . . Will you pray for him?” she pleaded, her faith striving, grasping, and hoping in the presence of this unexpected visitor.

“Yes, I will pray.” Bill went immediately to the head of the bed. Putting his hands on the boy’s head he commanded, “Jesus, heal this boy *now*.”

At that moment the boy opened his eyes and looked at his mother. “Mum, why are you crying?” he asked.

“Oh, son! You can speak to me!” the mother exclaimed.

“Yes, I’m all right now. Jesus has put His hands on my head. I know I’m all right now.”

Bill too knew that God had met the boy’s need, but he had been unprepared for what had happened so swiftly and now felt like an intruder in the emotion-charged room. He turned unobtrusively, walked out of the room, and left the hospital. Outside he breathed the fresh air deeply, worshiped God for His goodness, and went on his way.

About three days later Bill thought it would be nice to see how the boy was getting on, so he went downtown again to the hospital. When he stepped through the door the nurse from the desk went running over to him. “Are you the soldier who came to see the little boy who was run over with a steel roller?” she asked excitedly.

“Well, I didn’t know he had been run over—but yes, I am.”

“Wasn’t it wonderful?” she went on. “He has been examined and

found completely well!”

“Yes, it was wonderful. Praise the Lord!” Bill replied. “Can I see him?”

“See him? Oh no—you don’t understand! He’s been sent to Ottawa for tests; nobody could believe it. It is just incredible. . . . Please wait here a moment; I have to get the doctors to see you.”

Soon doctors and nurses were buzzing around him, asking questions. They were all very impressed by what had occurred, and when the facts came out it was little wonder. The boy had been run over by a steel road roller that had crushed practically everything inside him, and as the mother had said, there was no hope. Astounded by the recovery, the hospital had sent the lad to a larger hospital in Ottawa for extensive tests. Bill was elated and just praised the Lord. They finally let him go, giving him the address of the parents. Later, after the Ottawa hospital found the boy to be completely whole and released him, Bill went to see him at his home in Coburg. The family treated him like a king. Often he reflected on how God had spoken to him on the rifle range and how the Lord was able to wonderfully arrange every event.

CHAPTER Five

Rendezvous with Ruth

After having been apprehensive about coming to the camp, Bill now found himself sad to be leaving it for the trade school in Hamilton, Ontario. He had enjoyed the stay and the new friends. The initial feelings he felt were not always an accurate indicator in the work of God: satanic opposition had made him feel anxious, when all the time the enemy was more anxious than he.

The stay in Hamilton was to last eight weeks, and on arriving he set out to find the Pentecostal church there. While walking down a street he saw a poster advertising “Pentecostal Convention Brayside Camp.” How wonderful to be able to go! thought Bill. The poster said it began on Friday, and since classes would not start till the Wednesday after that, he asked for permission to attend. It was granted, but having only twenty-five cents in his pocket he set out on the highway hitchhiking. The man who stopped was a Christian who happened to be going to the same convention, so he was driven right onto the campground, where things were going in full swing. At the front of the meeting young people were praying to receive the Holy Spirit. He immediately went to help pray with them.

When the service finished, Bill found people there he had known from years before. Soon somebody gave him meal tickets, and another a bed in a cabin, while the pastor asked him to speak to the young people the following morning. He was very much at home and each night prayed with those seeking the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

One lad was having an especially hard time. “Listen,” said Bill to the boy, “I want to tell you that receiving the Holy Ghost is not forcing yourself but surrendering yourself.”

This made an impression on the boy, who resumed praying with a different attitude. Soon he was speaking in tongues and rejoicing. When he ceased praying he jumped up and said joyfully to Bill,

“Will you come with me? I want to tell Mum what has happened!”

“Mum” was a countrywoman who had not been able to get to the convention, so they went to the telephone and called her. She was thrilled. The boy’s pastor was at the convention and extended an invitation for Bill to come and preach for them. The boy, called Bruce, was at the camp with his two brothers, who all insisted Bill stay with them when he went to the country to preach.

The convention having finished, Bill was back on the army base when a letter arrived from the boy’s mother, inviting him to stay on the farm with them whenever it was convenient for him to go.

Bill looked at the map. It was a hundred miles to Brockville, which meant getting an extended weekend pass, so he put in a request. It was granted for Saturday till Tuesday the following fortnight, and he wrote telling the people when to expect him. Then, returning to camp one night, he saw a notice: all leave had been canceled for two weeks. It hit him like a baseball bat in the face.

A bunch of the boys had slipped outside one night and stolen basketfuls of ripe grapes from nearby fields. As they brought them back into camp, they had had a great time fighting with them, resulting in their quarters being decorated with squelched purple blobs. Unfortunately an officer had caught them. Canceled leave for all was the sole casualty of the grape war.

Lying in bed, Bill thought, That order is not God’s order—for shall the just suffer for the unjust? In the morning he approached his officer. “Sir, I would like a word with you.”

“Yes?” replied the officer, with a trace of weariness in his voice.

“I have a pass here, sir, for the weekend, to go to Brockville to see friends, and they’re expecting me to come. I didn’t steal or eat any grapes, and I don’t believe the just should suffer for the unjust. . . .”

“Just a moment! Who do you think you are, giving me orders?” the commanding officer cut in irately.

Bill respectfully held his ground. “I am not giving orders, sir; I am

just making a clear request for a bit of consideration and a favor.”

“Look here, who do you think you are?” responded the CO, still standing on his dignity.

“I don’t think, I know who I am, sir. I’m a son of God.”

“Oh, you’re religious, are you?” he said, raising his eyebrows.

“Yes, sir, if you want to call it that—I am religious.”

“Well, I too am a son of God.”

“Have you been born again?” asked Bill. That question came to him naturally when people claimed they were religious.

It rattled the officer. “Now look, I don’t want any argument or theological information from you—get out of my sight!”

Bill stepped back, saluted smartly, about-faced, and walked out of the office, praying silently. Just as he was walking down the corridor the CO called him back. A pang of conscience had gotten to him for treating the boy badly; he also felt bad for losing his posture as an officer. “I sort of like you,” he said when Bill reentered the room. “You’ve got a bit of spunk.”

“Thank you.”

“Now tell me about this religion you have.”

Bill gave his testimony of how he came to be saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. His story impressed the officer and stirred old memories within him. “You know, when I was a boy I went to Sunday school,” he confided.

“Don’t you go now, sir?”

“Oh no.”

“I go every time I get a chance. There’s nothing wrong with going to Sunday school—you learn more about the things of God and the Word of God.”

The conversation drew to a natural conclusion, and the officer had allowed himself to be touched by the Spirit of God. Like many, he was basically a decent type of man who, with the pressures of life and without the power of the Spirit, had just drifted away. He cleared his throat. "Well, thanks for the little talk we had; I didn't want you to go out thinking I was a mean old officer."

"Thank you very much, sir," said Bill. He saluted and left the room.

The following morning the men were all called out on parade. The officers harangued them for leaving camp, destroying the grape vines, and defacing government property. While this was taking place, a corporal marched briskly onto the parade ground with a paper in his hand, saluted the senior officer present, and handed it to him. A silence fell as the officer read the paper. After looking at it he called out: "G49155!"

Bill sprang to attention. "Sir!" he shouted as a warm feeling flushed through him.

"Step forward, please!" Bill went three paces forward. All eyes were on him, speculating about why he should be singled out like this.

"I have in my hand a privilege granted from the officer commanding training. It says you can leave on your weekend visit, but instead of leaving on Saturday morning you can leave on Thursday morning, and you may return to report for duty the following week on Wednesday." The parade gasped audibly.

Bill saluted and thanked the officer, feeling weak in the knees over all that had passed in front of the parade. They were dismissed immediately afterwards. The soldiers around him asked how he should get such privileges when the rest were confined to camp.

"Boys," said Bill, "it's because I'm a son of God!"

The days passed quickly, and he was on the train to the little town of Glencoe for his preaching appointment. As the train pulled into the station he saw the smiling face of the small boy who had received the Holy Ghost, together with his two brothers, on the platform. With them was a tall, dignified-looking man with gray

hair. The boys ran up to Bill and introduced him to the gray-haired man, their father. Then they grabbed his gear and bundled him into a small car, which bounced its way over the rough country roads to the farm.

The farmhouse was a large, well-cared-for building in such beautiful surroundings that he thought he could stay there forever. The father unloaded the car, and Bill, always a boy among boys, took to amusing and being amused by them. After a time their mother came out to announce that dinner was ready. From the aroma, he knew it was going to be something better than he got in the army.

A long, heavy table was the centerpiece of the kitchen, and Bill was placed at its head. He noticed that, apart from his, six places were set. While he was looking at the table, one of the boys said in a condescending and long-suffering manner, "Here comes my sister."

Bill was surprised. "You have a sister? How old is she?" he added, with the spontaneous curiosity of a young bachelor.

"Oh, seventeen."

"Great!"

"She's going to Bible school in Toronto," dropped the oldest boy.

"That is interesting."

Hearing steps, he turned towards the door. His heart jumped so hard it hurt his ribs when he recognized the shy and graceful girl who was briefly framed by the entrance before slipping into the room. But she barely noticed him, and her eyes looked away to everywhere but him. Did she recognize him? The previous year when he had first seen her seemed like yesterday again, and he remembered the conversation he had with Larry Price at that camp meeting:

"Who's that little girl there who was singing and playing the guitar?" he had asked Larry, pointing a discreet finger towards his quarry.

"Little girl?" Larry had returned as if the epithet didn't quite fit.

“Yes.”

“My Bill, she is untouchable! And she belongs to London or Chatham or somebody. But anyway she’s not for you; she’s too serious and legalistic!”

“I want to meet her; will you fix it up?” he had persisted, undeterred.

“Well . . . OK . . . I’ll try tonight after the young people’s meeting and see what I can do for you.”

Bill’s heart had been aflutter with expectation. Something had snapped when he had seen that girl. He had drifted towards the back of the church, lost in happy speculation, when he was stopped by Brother and Sister McKay. “Hey, Bill, we’ve been looking for you. Here’s a telegram. It says you must leave immediately and return to camp.”

Quickly he had gathered his belongings together and gotten into the car that Brother and Sister McKay had waiting. As they drove away, he had caught a glimpse of the girl with the guitar. “Goodbye, blind date,” he had said to himself wistfully as the car sped away. And he had thought that was the end of that.

Yet here she was, sitting at the other end of the table—the long table. But what did she think of him? Each time his eyes lifted towards her, she would drop hers. Not one smile of encouragement did she let slip. It would be a rough overture if the symphony was going to play.

Dinner seemed to end almost before it had begun. Before retiring, the boys began teasing him a lot about their sister, and he wondered whether he had made a fool of himself. Then talk turned to the coming service on Sunday. They would drive to church in the little car, and Bill anticipated sitting next to her and getting friendlier on the way.

Sunday morning came. Beaming and spruced up, he tactically hung back so he could sit in the front beside her. Not a bit of it. “Bill can sit in the back with the boys,” she said.

She was legalistic. Soldiers were no temptation to her at all. Cast down—but was he forsaken? The service was uplifting anyway, and he felt inspired in preaching. All too soon the day came to return to camp, and not knowing whether he had gained ground or lost, he climbed aboard the train. A wise old Christian once told him, “Bill, there are three B’s in music. Always be natural, or you’ll be too flat or be too sharp!” In playing the natural had he fallen flat? But hope elevates easily in the heart of those in love. He gave himself an A plus, and the little poem, “My Ever- Present Temptation” came to his mind:

I have tried to love you lightly, but without success,

To love you very little and never to excess.

I have sought to love you wisely, but this I cannot do.

All my vows are shattered, each time I look at you.

Before the train arrived back he had conceived another plan. Immediately he wrote to the boys asking them to come down to Hamilton and stay a few weeks, where dear old Sister Barton would be willing to put them up. Having got the boys down, he would use their presence as an excuse to take them on a visit to Toronto to see their sister.

Later, when the opportunity came, the boys were billeted in Hamilton, and they were all able to get a ride to Toronto. But only frustration waited at the end of that long journey. Ruth had gone out to play her guitar at some special meetings and would not be back before they had to leave. Fate seemed to have knocked on the door, but the second movement sounded like the retreat from Moscow.

If there was no melody, he could still try lyrics. Happily, his letters met with some restrained response. It was all he needed to become a novelist, and he slowly edged his way towards Ruth’s heart. By the time he was posted overseas, they had an understanding between them: an engagement to get engaged, if all worked out.

CHAPTER Six

Red-hot Movies

DeBert, Nova Scotia, and the boys were bored. After all the training, the transit camp that housed them while they waited to be shipped to England was anticlimactic. It was too far (and against rules anyway) to get leave passes for a visit home, and now they wanted to get on with it and go to Europe. For most of the men it would be their first visit overseas, and many were anticipating it with considerable interest. Some were even eager to get into battle.

To keep the men occupied, the authorities showed them educational films. At nine every morning they were marched onto the parade ground and then off to the theater, but the days of their confinement dragged on until the store of educational films was depleted. Soon they were faced with films that were educational in another way. Bill found them evil and devilish, for those days were days of tender conscience, before television piped its smut into every home to lower the threshold of shock. Sitting in the cinema, he felt anger and condemnation over both what he saw on the screen and what emotions were stirred within him.

The boys around laughed and nudged him. “You’re going to learn a few things today, Bill!” they said gleefully.

For the moment he was at a loss for words, but he determined on a course of action. The next morning he dropped out of the parade and asked permission to speak to the officer. “Sir,” Bill said, “I don’t care to go to the movie the boys call the late show—I don’t like that sort of thing.”

The officer was annoyed. “Who do you think is running this camp?” he asked.

“Well, sir, you are. That is why I am talking to you. You are in charge.”

“And so you don’t care to go in?” the officer said slowly, rolling the words with a touch of irony.

“Sir, I believe that I have something in my heart that I should protect, and God lives within me. I don’t feel that God would have me go in there at all!” Bill said, ignoring the irony.

“You will go in there and like it!” the officer retorted unimpressed.

“I may go in there, but I won’t like it.”

“If you don’t like it, you’ll lump it. I tell you to go in.” He dismissed Bill, who fell into the line.

Soon he was inside and found a seat about halfway down. He said to God, “Well, Lord, I don’t like it, so You’ll have to get me out of it.” Then, instead of sitting and facing the film, he knelt down with his back to the screen, praying silently. He knew in this situation not to pray out loud and make a fool of himself and the church. Praying like this he was disturbing nobody. The boys around him saw him praying and passed the amused message to their buddies. Laughing little “Hallelujahs!” and “Amens!” floated by for a while until they forgot about him.

“Fire! Fire! Fire!” somebody suddenly started shouting. Bill opened his eyes, got up, and looked around. Sure enough, smoke was filling the theater, and men were scrambling over seats towards the exits. He waited until nearly everybody had cleared the room, now filled with smoke, and made his way, coughing and spluttering, to the door. Who should be standing there but the officer who told Bill that he would like it or lump it! Bill saluted him, restraining, with difficulty, a smile.

Word soon spread around to all the men that Bill had been praying in the movie house, hence the fire. He was a kind of mini-Elijah!

On parade the following morning they learned that only the film had caught fire, and the cinema was still operational. The men were marched down there again. Bill thought, Well, I still have my knees, and I know what to do with them! While he thought along these lines his number was called out. He fell out of line, went over, and saluted the officer who had called his name. The captain told him he must report to the commanding officer. Off he marched to the CO’s office, announced himself to the corporal in the anteroom, and

was allowed to proceed in.

The CO sat with both arms on his desk, twirling a pencil between his fingers; an open file was on his desk. He looked steadfastly at Bill and then said, "I understand that you have conviction."

"Yes, sir, I have some convictions," Bill said courteously.

"Would you mind telling me first of all if you got down and prayed when you went into the movie house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why should you do that?" he asked, still twirling the pencil.

"Well, the Bible says that everything must be done through prayer and supplication. I knew that God would deliver me," Bill added.

The CO dug his pencil into the blotting pad, looking down at it.

"Now I am going to ask you a question. If I lift you from the obligation of going to that movie house, what could you do with the time?"

Bill thought just for a second. "The chapel was built for people to pray and seek God, and it is only used for an hour on Sunday. There are plenty of books there. I could read and pray. I would be happy to go there and to report back as soon as the movie is finished."

"Listen," said the CO, raising his head and pointing his pencil at Bill, "I'm going to do you a favor. You don't have to report on any of these days at all. You can go to town if you want to—you can go anywhere, but just don't say too much to the others. It might cause confusion. You are dismissed."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bill happily. Yet again in a CO's office, he saluted, about-faced, and left the room with the warm feeling that God had vindicated him.

After praying in the chapel each morning, Bill grabbed a bus and went into town to have lunch with the local Pentecostal pastor and his wife. It was an enjoyable three weeks he had before they sailed eastward one night. For many of the boys, the dim lights of Nova

Scotia would be their last look at Canada: they were destined to be in some of the worst fighting of the Western front.

CHAPTER Seven

So Who Was Cain's Cutie?

Though the crossing was relatively tranquil—the weather being kind and U-boats failing to find them—Bill had a terrible trip. He spent a lot of it lying on his back trying to keep down pills. He got seasick walking on wet grass.

Liverpool is not the loveliest port of entry into the United Kingdom, even on a lovely day, but after days at sea on a crowded troop ship it took on a more attractive air. The terraced streets, the funny accents, and the quaint old English ways all kept the boys amused. Shortly after arriving they were assigned, inevitably, to Aldershot. As they caught glimpses of the lush countryside, full of its spring and promise, the war seemed as remote as it had in Canada.

At Aldershot, Bill met quite a few Pentecostals he'd known from back home. They were always actively witnessing to the boys around them and formed a group to hold services. While Bill was giving out a tract one time, a soldier said to him, "Billy, don't you remember me?"

Bill looked at him closely and was astonished. The face was very familiar, but he could not put a name on it. And although he knew the face well, it seemed to have changed in the most intangible way. Then it struck Bill—the face had lost the radiance he had known in it. There was disquietude in it now. "Yes, I know you, but I can't remember your name," he confessed.

The boy smiled, "I'm Morris. You used to teach in Dad's church back home."

"Oh yes, I remember now!" said Bill. After a brief conversation he asked, "Will you be coming to the church tonight?"

"Billy," said Morris sadly, "I don't think I'm in victory."

Bill looked at the lad, feeling compassion for him. Morris was a respected pastor's son and had once been full of joy and enthusiasm

for the work. "That's just the place you need to go, then!" said Bill encouragingly, putting his arm around his shoulder. "I'll be seeing you tonight, then?"

Morris relaxed. "Sure, Billy," he grinned.

True to his word, Morris came to the meeting that night. At the end of the meeting he came forward and rededicated his life to God. The radiance returned to his face, and he had a wonderful time in the Spirit, speaking in tongues and worshiping God. The following day Bill and Morris met for a talk, and Morris asked Bill to write to his father and tell him all was well with his soul.

With tears dripping from his eyes, Bill wrote to New Brunswick, recalling to the father how he had taught Morris in Sunday school and telling how good God had been in arranging for them to meet in England so unexpectedly. Then the best news of all: Bill told in detail how wonderfully Morris had come and been refilled with the Spirit after rededicating his life to God.

Shortly afterwards that pastor received a telegram saying that Morris had been killed in an accident. The same day he received Bill's letter, which was read at the memorial service. It was a great comfort.

Bill was then posted to Whitney in Yorkshire for a medical course. The chapel there was always open, so he went early each morning to pray and worship God. One morning while praying, he heard the door squeak open, which was very unusual. He continued praying, however, and when finished he walked past the other soldier at the back of the chapel. The man opened his eyes and said to him as he went by, "Praise the Lord!"

"Praise the Lord!" Bill replied.

"I am Jack West, and you are Bill Drost. I knew you had been moved down here because I inquired since coming to England. I heard about you in Nova Scotia, and I have anticipated and looked forward to meeting you."

Bill was a bit taken aback but instinctively felt a great warmth

towards this man. He was obviously full of the Spirit and enthusiasm for winning people to Christ. He put out his hand. "Well, I'm very pleased to meet you."

"What do you think of this camp?" asked Jack.

"They need God," Bill responded.

"That's just what I was thinking."

"What do you think then, Jack—what shall we do?"

"Couldn't we use this chapel to have some meeting?"

"Not without permission."

"Well, that is just what we will get," Jack said, undaunted.

Since it was still before breakfast, they went down to see the padre. He was shaving when they approached him. "Hello, boys, what can I do for you at this early hour of the morning?" he asked cheerfully.

"We have come to ask a request," said Bill.

"If I can do it I will be happy to."

"We are Christians, born again, and have noticed that there is a sort of lackadaisical spirit among the men here. There is not much activity for them to do either, and we thought it would be a good idea if we could hold some gospel meetings every night."

"Oh, I see what you mean," he said thoughtfully, slowly slicing the foam from his face. "You know, I am looking after the spiritual welfare of these boys."

"Yes, we understand that. But with all due respect, sir, we feel that, by the grace and Spirit of God, we could add our testimony."

"Hmmm . . . I suppose you are the kind of boys that believe in the Holy Spirit."

"Yes indeed, sir!" they chimed together.

"I understand—but you know, boys, I just take the meat and leave the bones."

Jack looked at him. "Sir, when it comes to the Bible and its truths, there isn't a bone in it!"

The padre returned Jack's look, knowing they would not be satisfied until they had their way. "Well, I suppose boys you could have use of the chapel for an hour each night."

"Thank you very much, sir! Would you please put that in Part Two standing orders? Then it will be legal," said Bill.

"For tomorrow?"

"No, sir, if you just do it now, I'll take it over to the printing office immediately," said Jack. The padre complied.

On their way to breakfast Jack slapped Bill cheerfully on the back, "That wasn't so difficult after all!" Being in different companies, they parted into separate mess halls for breakfast. As the men were sitting down, Bill remained standing, taking his spoon and banging it against a tin plate to command attention. It was against the rules to do anything like this, but he had an announcement to make.

"Listen, boys," Bill said eagerly. "I've got a special message! Tonight we're going to have a gospel evangelistic service in the chapel, and the Reverend Jack West, a man whom you will like to know, will be speaking!" With that he sat down and ate.

Unknown to Bill, Jack had done the same thing next door, announcing Bill as the speaker. Getting together, they decided that Jack should speak and lead the singing, while Bill, if need be, would give the altar call.

A number of men came along, some out of sheer curiosity, and Jack preached about getting into the boat of salvation. During the course of the meeting the padre walked in, taking his place as inconspicuously as possible among the men. Jack finished and handed the service to Bill to make the appeal.

While Bill was in the Spirit, Jack made his way down the aisle

towards the padre, who was looking a bit uncomfortable. “Padre,” Jack said boldly but sincerely, “why don’t you be the first to give your heart to Jesus Christ and set a good example to the boys here tonight!”

The padre never did go back to their meeting, though during the weeks a number of boys repented and were filled with the Holy Ghost. But it was not without a battle. Some feedback had gotten to the commanding officer, who called them into his office. They stood at attention before his desk. A big man from New Brunswick, he lounged back in his chair but looked agitated. “Look here, you men, I’ve heard about these meetings you’re having. Now religion is one thing, but I don’t want any of this whooping and hollering and screaming and Holy Roller stuff around here! Do you understand?”

Bill and Jack said nothing, accepting the rebuff with a smile. Their silence seemed to upset him; he got up and walked towards a bookshelf at the side of the room, then turned towards Jack. “There is one thing that has always been a holdup, and I know it is a holdup to you boys, and if I ask I am sure you couldn’t answer.” He then smiled indulgently, savoring the situation. Reseating himself he said, “Now, West, will you tell me who was Cain’s wife?”

Jack was tall, blond and handsome . . . this would add to the ring of his reply. He smiled straight back at the CO. “Well, that is not a new question to me, sir, but I want to tell you one thing—I have not been interested in other men’s wives!” Bill almost exploded with laughter, biting his tongue and sucking in his cheeks to control himself.

The CO was enraged. “Get out—get out of my sight!” he shouted, rising from his chair, red-faced. “I knew you fellows couldn’t answer such a question. This pie-in-the-sky stuff sickens me, so don’t talk to me anymore about it!”

A few days later there was a company inspection, so the five hundred men were in formation on the parade ground. Bill was in one line and Jack in another. The CO eventually came out, strutting back and forth with swagger stick in hand, the epitome of military dignity.

Suddenly, he stopped and faced the parade. "Boys," he said with unusual graciousness, "I know that some of you have been attending some of these evangelistic services, so maybe you would like me to ask the boys a question or two. I will ask Jack West something that he was hung up on the other day. He said he couldn't answer me, but maybe after thinking about it he can now." The eyes of the parade went to Jack, who stood to attention and took a couple of paces forward. "The other day you and your friend were in my office and you couldn't answer me, but now I am giving you a chance before all the fellows. Do you remember," he said tauntingly, "I asked you: 'Who was Cain's wife?'" Bill prayed fervently for God to give Jack wisdom, while silence hung over the riveted parade.

"Sir," Jack's voice boomed into the silence with slow and deliberate cadence, "when I get to heaven, if Cain is there, I'll ask him. . . . If he's not there, you'll have to ask him!"

The poor man dropped his head, crushed and not daring to look at anybody while the parade rocked as it struggled to contain its mirth. These events had their impact, for after the war this same old CO would go forward and repent during a tent campaign conducted by . . . Jack West.

It was typical that Bill and Jack were not intimidated by rank. On the streets of London the pair of them were handing out tracts one day when a colonel passed by. "Don't give me this rubbish!" was his first comment, but they persisted speaking to him until he broke down and surrendered to Jesus just where he was. Their philosophy was that a church isn't necessary for a man to come to know Christ, only people willing to share and to challenge, wherever they may be.



CHAPTER Eight

War

In the summer of 1944, a city of ships sat outside Normandy disgorging men and machines into a continent ravaged by insanity and long indifference to it. In France, a white rabbit and the Resistance left their burrows, wreaking havoc on the Nazis' freedom of movement. *A man that never was* helped dupe Hitler to expect an invasion in the Pas de Calais; a Man that *was, and is, and is to come*, the ultimate metaphysic of history, for whose cause the liberators claimed they came, looked down and controlled the elements. But not the element of humanity, for humans did not will it.

The mad dream of the Nazis faded into an anxious dawning of doubts and fears of revenge. The nation that gave birth to Luther had forgotten its history and embraced a modern, more magnificent Barabbas, who promised them bread. Against that, the promised megalomania of *Mein Kampf* seemed to matter little. So the sins of the fathers were about to be visited upon the children also: sins of apathy, silence, acquiescence, misplaced pride, excessive nationalism, and utter moral cowardice were about to tear a nation in two. And a devil called Stalin would take the hindmost.

For the Allies too, national sins of apathy and silence, of “demythologizing” and twice watering down Christianity—first to deism and then to a vague deistic humanism, with its ultimate misreading of human nature and the forces of history—for these sins and many others, they would bring along with this longest day a new era of insecurity and incessant antagonisms. The strong, young blood of heroes far from home was shed not for a new civilization based on Christian values but so people could watch television while Marxists evangelized a weary world with their message of economic determinism. With a monstrous war machine too—for they would not hesitate to convert with the sword.

Ultimately, all world empires will have Ichabod written as their epitaphs. Then along will come many a so-called intellectual, who knows no God and especially not one called Jesus, to rewrite their

history and attempt to change even their glory to shame.

But to those in the steel landing craft the future was mercifully hid. The day was theirs. Retribution would grind forward as sure as the earth orbits the sun, and they would be its instruments. A bridge at Arnhem would hinder them for a while.

Bill was with the engineers building bridges at the scene of action most of the time. Life was a vast vignette of bombs, smoke, blood, fire, vapor. Everywhere was the stink of dead bodies, the sight of innumerable men's entrails wrapped around halftacks, cold, and suffering. There was little communion with anybody other than the Maker. In his tunic Bill kept a box of "precious promises," and when things were really bad he would take one and accept it as the word of the Lord especially to him.

Occasionally, there was a victory parade. In Belgium he was kissed by so many girls in one day that he felt ashamed to tell. In Holland he met Jack West several times, but they were soon separated and into action again.

One night there was a lull in the fighting. Nobody was sure what was about to happen, but the story was going around of a huge assault to be made. Then an order came for them all to appear before the officer in charge of their company. They mustered in their fatigues as there was no time to change into combat uniform. There was to be a surprise attack across a deep river, and everyone, including the engineers, was to be issued Bren guns, rifles, grenades, and flamethrowers. Anything that moved and offered resistance—man or beast—was to be mown down immediately.

Back in the schoolhouse where they were billeted, Bill fell on his face and remembered how, back in Fredericton, the Lord had filled him with holy laughter and told him that he would never have to carry a gun nor kill a fellow human being. "Lord," said Bill earnestly, "what are You going to do now? I cannot get out of this situation." Delving into his box of "precious promises" he pulled out and read: "I, the Lord thy God, am with thee; I will be with thee on thy right hand and left."

Bill praised God, and then the order came for them to go. They

stood in line to be issued with weapons, but Bill didn't hurry and was near the back, the seventy-ninth man in line. Just as the NCO went to pass Bill a Bren gun, the officer exclaimed, "Hold it, hold it! In this group we are supposed to have some first aid men, and we haven't detailed anybody." Looking at Bill, he asked, "Do you know anything about first aid?"

"Yes sir. I have taken an order in the Ambulance Corps."

"All right, don't take a gun; you just take a first aid kit. Stay with the boys and serve as the Red Cross."

Bill felt the same laughter rising that had come the very first time. How true to His Word God was! This time, though, there would be no running around the barracks: they scrambled across the towboat into barges for the river assault, and Bill found himself lying beside a flamethrower. Nearby was a halftrack assault vehicle. A tune came to his mind, and he began singing a song that says God's love reaches to the deepest hell. He felt very happy.

Opposite, a sad-faced soldier looked at him. "I don't know how you can sing and be happy at a time like this!" he grumbled.

"Because I have eternal life!" Bill explained.

The assault was, surprisingly, unopposed, and when they reached the other bank they jumped out into the marshes, then up to a hillside beyond. The enemy had retreated, and all they saw were a few prisoners of war.

A few weeks later Bill got a letter from Sister Morrow in Canada, asking what had happened to him the day before Easter. That was the day they crossed the river. She had had a vision of a big machine with a number on it, which number she gave. At the same time the Spirit had told her to pray. This number was the number of the halftrack next to Bill on the barge. Thus far, God had kept his hand on Bill and vindicated him all the way.

All these things were in the shadow of his memory as he surveyed the dead and wounded before him on the open ground in front of the boulder, while someone put the satchel of dynamite over his

shoulder. "OK, Drost, you go in," he had been ordered. He said a quick prayer: "Lord, if I have to be hit, don't let me be wounded here in the field so that someone will have to look after me. I want to die instantly." Then, without hesitation, he moved out from cover with head held high, speaking in tongues.

If ever he appreciated prayer in the Spirit he did now. Tracers flew about him; bullets pitted the ground before and behind. Still, he held a steady pace, hardly aware of the screaming machine guns and stuttering rifles around him. He reached the rock and placed the explosive charge on it. Instead of beating back to cover, he raised his hands and worshiped God in tongues, glorifying Him for His goodness.

Then he saw a vision in the sky: The heavens opened and a great map of South America shone before him. All the northern part, which was Colombia, was ablaze with fire—fire of spiritual revival. And with the vision came a still, small voice: "I have called you to South America; this is where I am taking you." Bill knew then that neither the enemy nor the devil had enough ammunition to blast him out of existence till God had finished His work with him. He continued to worship a while before walking back to the men, praying with head held high. His companions knew that something extraordinary had occurred—like those who had been with Paul in the Damascus Road, even though they had not seen the vision themselves. It soon got out that whenever anything of an unusually dangerous undertaking was at hand, Bill Drost was the man to have around. He always got through.

The vision set Bill thinking. Now he must write to Ruth and tell her it was all off, because he must go to Colombia as a missionary. He shared his vision with her and with a somewhat aching heart told her to forget about him. Unbeknown to Bill, about the time he had the vision, Ruth, while attending a meeting in Bible school, received a call to go as a missionary. The very day he wrote to her, she wrote to him telling him to forget about her, since she had received a call to . . . South America! Their letters crossed in the Atlantic: they would go to Colombia together after all.

CHAPTER Nine

A Plumber Predicts

Not many months after Easter the war in Europe was over, and Bill's unit was posted back to England. While there, Bill became seized with the idea of seeing the famous Smith Wigglesworth, who lived at Bradford in Yorkshire. Author of *Ever-Increasing Faith*, which would continue being published decades after his death, the world-traveled evangelist had brought the touch of God to heal thousands. Wigglesworth, then eighty-six years old, had been a plumber much of his life and a Christian worker part time. When he was forty-eight, Wigglesworth had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. This had energized him like a man with a reactor implanted in his heart, making him tireless in evangelistic zeal. God had wrought many special miracles by his hand, and his faith was legendary.

Bill got three days of leave and a train ticket. Later that day he stood before an inconspicuous-looking house. Knocking at the door, he had goose pimples of anticipation at the prospect of meeting this man who was filled with faith. He heard somebody turn the latch. Before him stood an old lady, smartly dressed with white hair pulled back tightly on her head. She looked at him quizzically, alert eyes revealing a youthful mind. "Yes?"

"Is this where Brother Smith Wigglesworth lives?" Bill asked courteously.

"Well . . . yes, he is here," she replied cautiously.

"Could I see him, please?"

"Is it important?" she asked, like a skillful secretary defending the domain of a director's office.

Bill continued deferentially, "You see, I have read his book, and I have heard of the way God has blessed him. I would like to meet him." As the old lady seemed doubtful, Bill prayed under his breath.

"I don't know for sure whether he will be disposed or not—but I shall go up and ask him," she finally conceded. He remained standing at the door, because she had not asked him in.

The old lady walked sedately down the stairs, head bowed a little in thought. "Oh," she said, seeing Bill still standing at the door, "I'm sorry; please do come in and sit down. I believe Brother Smith Wigglesworth will see you."

He sat down on a soft chair, eyes towards the steps. Now his heart beat quicker as he wondered what the appearance of this mighty man of God would be. Then he heard a rough voice say very lowly and reverently, "Praise God, hallelujah!" Bill knew this was the language of a soul that knew how to worship God. He looked towards the top of the stairs. There stood a man . . . but he was just an ordinary-looking mortal. He had entertained some very strange ideas about Wigglesworth, not knowing whether to expect one like Elijah, one angelic in appearance, or what. It was a peculiar sensation now; in part it seemed anticlimactic to watch this aged man walk down the stairs and stand across from his chair. Wigglesworth looked at Bill gruffly. Bill stood up to greet him.

Dismissing the gesture with a wave of his hand, Wigglesworth said, "Oh no. Sit down and be at ease." Then, "Who sent you?"

Bill was a bit taken aback by the question; he thought a moment. "Well . . . I . . . I guess I came by myself."

Wigglesworth plowed on with his questions. "What are you going to do with your life?"

"What am I going to do with my life?" Bill often repeated a question when he was surprised. It gave him time to let the surprise sink in and to think about a reply. "Well, I really believe that God will take care of that. . . . I believe that God has called me."

Again Wigglesworth looked at him gruffly, "So God has called you, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, brother."

A piercing eye bore through him into his soul. “Do you think God will call a man with pride in his heart?”

“Pride in my heart!” exclaimed Bill. He was floored.

“You have pride in your heart,” Wigglesworth stated boldly.

“Brother, if I have pride in my heart,” said Bill sincerely, “I don’t know it.”

“It’s the devil’s business to make you not know it,” he returned. Then looking at his hand and pointing at his finger, “Take that ring off your finger!”

In Bill’s mind a revelation exploded. That very beautiful ring on his finger, which had been given him in Holland—how often he’d thought how smart he looked with it! How proud he had been of it, watching it glint in the summer sun! “Throw it down here!” commanded the prophetic figure before him.

Bill was amazed and had no argument. Quickly he slid it off his finger and flung it down before the man. As it bounced on the rug, Wigglesworth lifted his hands and began to speak in tongues. He spoke very evenly and very slowly. Then he gave the interpretation, while Bill listened incredulously:

God has spoken to you through a flaming vision. You will go to Colombia; you will witness for Jesus Christ—but remember: there are devils on the street; there are devils in the air; there are devils everywhere. Prepare to fight the devil himself—to fight against the powers of the devil, because not only will you find them out on the streets but you will find them among people you associate with as much, undoubtedly. You will find you have been with some people who you think are your friends but who are not your friends.

Brother Smith Wigglesworth then looked at the young man before him with eyes full of compassion. Putting his hand on his head, he began to pray for him. Bill was unable to contain himself and sat back down in his seat for fear of falling headlong. Never had he been so overpowered by the Spirit of prophecy. Everything! The Spirit had shown Wigglesworth everything! Bill closed his eyes and

looked to God.

Wigglesworth had now taken a seat beside Bill. He started giving him admonition and advice, adding, "God has a plan for your life. He will give you a wife. Not only will you go to Colombia but to many, many parts of the world." He strongly cautioned Bill to keep in touch with God. Bill knew what this meant: a life with much prayer. It was already his life anyway.

This meeting was one of the last great events in Smith Wigglesworth's remarkable life. Within a year he would be gone from this life.

They parted with that deep understanding that abides between old warriors and the young who pick up their torch. The call of Colombia burned more fiercely in Bill than ever.

CHAPTER Ten

Bill Drost the Pentecost

The people in England had been good to Bill, as they had been in Holland also, and it had been very pleasant in Europe after the war ended. But now he was happy to be marching up the gangplank, back to Canada and civilian life. He was just thirty years old. Half of those thirty years he had been a Spirit-filled Christian, and half a lifetime later the enthusiasm had not dimmed; indeed it was as fresh as ever. The secret was twofold: first, he spent much time in the presence of the Spirit; second, he kept his eyes out for the needs of people, and did not succumb to self-centered feelings in their many facets. He could endure hardship, and what he perhaps lacked in outstanding intellect he more than made up for in spiritual perception and sensitivity. And faith. God would see him through, as He had always done.

But he couldn't find faith over seasickness. He was on his back all the way from Liverpool to Nova Scotia, unable even to get up when Newfoundland first came into sight. At last the soldiers reached Halifax and a hero's welcome: bands, families, friends, lovers. The ship almost listed to port as men rushed to one side, trying to see a familiar face. Before they were allowed to disembark, the band struck up, and a voice came over the loudspeaker: "Boys, you're back; the war is over. Thank you for all you have done, and we wish you the best of life in the civilian realm again. Thank you, thank you!" Everybody clapped and cheered on the quayside, and then they were let off. Chatter, chatter, chatter, clusters of weeping, laughing, joyful, chattering people everywhere. Many a handshake, many a goodbye, many a promise to write, and then Bill was off. The face he wanted to see was in Toronto.

Before Toronto, though, he felt he must go home to New Brunswick to see his mother, who had gone to a Pentecostal church for the first time while he was overseas. It had been a breakthrough for her to do that, and she had promised to return to the church when Willie got back from the war. They had prayed together before he left, Bill remembered. Now she was beyond rationality, having

suffered a massive stroke. Never would she go to church again with the child she had prayed would be a preacher even before he was born.

In Fredericton he was brought before an officer for the final interview before demobilization. His file was open on the officer's desk, and he was greeted warmly by the distinguished-looking young man. "What are you going to do now that you are going back into civilian life?" he asked.

"I'm going to South America," Bill replied.

"Oh, what are you going to do in South America? Work for an oil company?"

"Well, I'm going to work for a big company."

"It must be big if you're going all the way down there to work. Are you sure of the job?"

"Oh yes, very sure," Bill replied confidently.

"Tell me about it," the officer asked courteously.

Bill took a deep breath, "Well, sir, I'm going to be a missionary."

"A missionary?" he asked reflectively, then, looking at his watch, "I'd like to talk with you. How about meeting me for lunch around twelve o'clock?"

"Why, yes, sir," Bill responded with enthusiasm.

"We'll go out on the town, so to speak. I'll take you to a good restaurant where we can have a good meal and talk. My name is Goforth," he added, holding out his hand.

Bill shook it. "You mean the Goforths who were missionaries to China?"

"That was my mother. I admire you," he went on. "I've looked at your file and you have maintained a Christian record all the way through, haven't you?"

“I hope so,” said Bill. “That is what God saved me for.”

Over lunch Captain Goforth shared with Bill many of the things that had happened to his parents. Virtually the whole of the Goforth family had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and Bill was very encouraged by all he heard. After lunch he lost no time going to the railway.

“Thedford, Ontario,” Bill said to the ticket clerk. Ruth was now a deaconess, assisting the work with another lady. When the train arrived at the platform he saw her there, blushing, shy as usual, and looking not only as sweet but sweeter than ever. After a few days Jack West came down, and they had meetings together. Bill and Ruth arranged to get married on June 15.

One warm day just before they were married, Bill was working with Ruth’s father in the fields, gathering hay, when one of the local ministers came by to ask if they would go with him to visit a sick person. Bill readily agreed, not knowing that his father-in-law had previously arranged this. Little did he realize that they were going to a lunatic asylum.

As he entered through the big wrought-iron gates onto the gravel drive, his heart was touched by the blank looks of the patients who peered at them. At the reception they were given numbers and had to linger in the waiting room until their number was called. When their turn came, a guard with a big ring of keys opened a massive door leading into a wide corridor. He beckoned to them to follow him closely. It was the first time Bill had visited such a place, and he found the atmosphere more oppressive than that of a dugout in Germany. They had just entered the corridor when a man of about forty, whom Bill had never laid eyes on before, gently walked up towards him. Then, unexpectedly, the inmate put his hand on Bill’s shoulder and, staring him in the eye, said, “I know you—you’re Bill Drost.”

Bill was totally stunned. They were in London, Ontario, and he knew not one person in the institution; he did not even know the man they were going to see. Instantly he felt a quickening of the Holy Spirit and felt he had met face to face with a man being used by the devil himself. He remembered that Smith Wigglesworth had

instructed him never to try to cast out a devil unless the devil was active in a person. It was obvious to him that Satan had revealed to the man that he was a Spiritfilled person. Bill looked the man in the eye and replied, "I rebuke you, you demon of hell!"

"Ah!" the man screamed. He jumped, turned, and ran to two or three other inmates in the corridor. They joined hands, encircling Bill, dancing around, and singing in a weird chorus, reminiscent of the witches in *Hamlet*: "Bill Drost the Pentecost! Bill Drost the Pentecost!" It happened so quickly that the guard did not had time to respond; everyone simply looked on in amazement.

Finally, the guard ushered the prancing inmates away. As they went forward, Bill felt prepared in the Spirit for any event that Satan would throw at him.

They were led through a locked door into a padded cell. Everything was padded, even the floor. A single bed was in the room. On it, chained at each leg and hand, was a completely demented man. "Let us pray," said the minister, kneeling beside the bed. Soon he was praying in tongues very fervently when, all of a sudden, the man levitated up from the bed to the very length of the chains. He then let out a piercing scream, saying, "Babylon! Babylon! All is Babylon!"

Immediately, feeling the power of the Holy Ghost, Bill rebuked the demon in the name of Jesus Christ. To the surprise of all, a calm settled straight over the man, who then looked up to Bill's father-in-law and asked, "Archie, what am I doing here?"

Recognizing that God had done a mighty work and that the demon had been cast out, they all rejoiced. A number of days later the man was released, though it was found that he had tuberculosis and he initially had to be sent to a sanatorium. This was the first time the disease had been found in the man, and Bill believed it was a departing satanic blow. In the hospital, the man's friends were then able to speak to him about the Lord, to whom he turned.

From that time Bill became known as "Bill Drost the Pentecost!" It had been a good introduction to demons: in South America, as Smith Wigglesworth had prophesied, he was going to meet many

more.



The Wedding

CHAPTER Eleven

Discouragement

After the wedding, things went well at first. Brother Stairs proceeded with their application for residence while the churches, certain it was the will of God, shared their enthusiasm and promised support. Waiting for their papers, they moved to Grey Rapids, traveling to Chatham each day in an old Model A Ford to help Brother Dudley with his summer tent campaign. Chatham, however, was quite Catholic, and only a few joined the Pentecostal church. Had they received as many visitors as those who threw stones and eggs, they would have been happy. Bill thought it was good training for Colombia, however, and at the end of summer they moved to Chatham to pastor the little group.

Ruth was now expecting a baby, due in April. Because some friends had had a bad experience at the local hospital, which was run by nuns who were anti-Pentecostal, Bill insisted that Ruth have the baby at home. They had no money for hospitals anyway. The baby was a boy, Gerald, and when the nurse laid him aside to attend to Ruth, Bill slipped in quietly, taking him downstairs. There, kneeling on the carpet, he worshiped God, praying for Him to guide the boy and make him a vessel for His glory.

Early in 1948 they were informed that they could depart. They packed their few belongings and Bill, on the first day of spring, preached his farewell message at Chatham, taking as his text Isaiah 13:12: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold." They later made a final round of the local churches, and in the middle of these farewells news came that during an uprising in Bogota, the Colombian capital, their papers had been burnt, and they were unable to proceed.

Colombian politics were ever volatile. In April, the liberal politician Gaitan, an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency in the previous election, was murdered. His killing undermined moderate influence in the political factions. It was attributed, though without proof, to the communists. Bill now had no idea what to do, or how long it

would be before they would receive clearance again. Furthermore, they had no home to go to. The pastors quickly rallied round with evangelistic invitations to them, while Brother Stairs, with the help of a lady missionary in Cartagena, set to work on a new permit.

The months of the summer rolled by without word. In October the good news at last came that their visa was ready and would be delivered by their colleagues on their arrival at the Barranquilla airport, on Colombia's northeastern coast. Having a little white Austin, which was to be shipped, they drove to New York for what would be their first airplane trip. It had been in many ways a frustrating three years, but now that they were on their way, the time seemed to have passed quickly.

The South American liberator Bolivar had been largely responsible for the creation of Colombia, which was carved from the old Spanish-American empire in the early part of the nineteenth century. Originally it was called Great Colombia and under Bolivar had been united with the countries now known as Venezuela and Ecuador. After the secession of these countries it was called first New Granada, afterwards the Confederacion Granadina, the United States of Colombia, and finally, in 1866, the Republic of Colombia. Its history, like that of so many South American countries, had its share of internal strife. Two basic factions had sought control of Colombia: the conservatives who supported the Catholic church, and the liberals, in the main anticlerical and anticentralist. In 1948 the conservative Ospina Perez was president. Underlying and surface animosities were bringing the country close to civil war, as seen in the Bogota uprising.

Bill was not bothered by politics too much, nor greatly interested in it. But he was interested in what purports to be the purpose of politics: the well-being of man.

Barranquilla was hot, but the airport was hotter, the sun reflecting off the tarmac. The Larsens, who should have been there to meet them and give them their entry papers, were nowhere to be found, so they sat on their suitcases, hot, tired, bewildered, and unable to get through immigration. Older Colombians stared at them while the children came as close as they dared to satisfy their curiosity. There was no shade and certainly no air- conditioned transit lounge

that travelers today take for granted. At last the missionaries appeared, cleared them through customs, and drove them downtown to set them on the bus for Cartagena.

That first bus trip was unforgettable. Night falls around six in Colombia, and it was just before that when they left. The bus windows had no glass, presumably to help ventilation. Stuffed in its compartments like a railway carriage, everybody in the compartment was in a little world together. Together, that is, with chickens, pigs, baskets of assorted produce, screaming babies, children with running noses, insects attracted by the lights, and whatever else could be squeezed into the space available. At each stop somebody and his entourage practically fell into one's lap as they tried to get off; then somebody and his odiferous entourage actually did fall into one's lap as they fought to get on. Competing against all this were numerous vendors of sweetmeats. Little Gerald screamed with fear at all the strange faces that peered at him. The four hours seemed like four years.

Bill was a tall, well-built man, but Pearl Cooper, the lady missionary with whom they were to stay in Cartagena, left him for a lightweight. She was almost as big as Bill—sideways. After meeting them at the bus station she took them to her place . . . which turned out to be a third-floor apartment over a bar in the most notorious part of town. To get to the flat, one climbed up a metal fire escape on the outside of the wall.

Looking down from the stairs, one met a scene that could have passed for the Wild West. In the bar below, drunken men drooped over rough wooden tables, while most of the rest who remained awake were either fighting, shouting, or arguing.

The terrific heat made the stench from the toilets overwhelming. Dirt, paper, filth—everything was strewn everywhere.

It was probably for the best that Pearl looked as though she could hold her own, thought Bill. Ruth was horrified, wondering how she could keep baby Gerald from eating the garbage that lay around. (As it turned out, she couldn't.) Pearl seemed oblivious to all, stepping over obstacles without a second thought, while the mangiest-looking cats Bill had ever seen peered suspiciously out of

places where they lurked. He hoped they kept the rats away.

Though they were famished, Pearl had not thought to prepare them a meal but gave them a cold drink and soda biscuits (a treat in those days, but not very filling). They said nothing, going to bed hungry and exhausted. At breakfast they were given milk soup, a local delicacy, once you got used to it, but their stomachs craved something simpler—like ham and eggs.

Life with Pearl proved to be a very trying experience. She had two white dogs that went everywhere with her. They even sat next to her on the church platform. She treated the locals like a colonial colonel, which hurt Bill, who resolved never to be patronizing or colonial in any way. Pearl seemed hostile to men, and though she had started works in various parts of the city, Bill could act only as her chauffeur. She never allowed him to preach and created problems by taking Ruth into her confidence but not Bill, setting his wife against him at times. He found the language extremely difficult to master. Ruth was picking it up all right, but whenever someone said “si” (“yes”), Bill almost got a kink in his neck, straining to see. And the language, he had thought, would be the least of his problems.

After almost a year of being treated as the “boy” by Pearl, sparring with Spanish without much success, and battling malaria, he felt totally discouraged. The man they had hired to teach them Spanish had instead used the time mostly to improve his own English. One morning, feeling he could take no more, Bill wrote a letter to the mission board asking to be recalled and promising to pay back every penny that had been spent on him, once he could find work in Canada. Though the letter was an admission of failure, he breathed a big sigh of relief as he sealed the envelope. Failure was a lesser burden than the one he was carrying, and the money could be used on somebody else.

“Pack the trunks, honey, we’re going home. I’m going out to post this letter.”

Ruth felt sorry for her husband but said nothing. As soon as he left home, she fell to her knees and prayed that God would help and strengthen them. Bill set out to drive to the post office but instead

found himself driving to the ocean, where he often went to pray. Throwing himself down on the sand he groaned in the Spirit . . . and prayed and prayed.

Some hours later Bill came into the house smiling. “I guess we won’t be going home—I’ve torn up the letter I was going to send. Jesus will help us through.”

Ruth felt very thankful and relieved. The crisis that she knew had been coming was over.

CHAPTER Twelve

Call to Cali

Almost immediately afterwards, a telegram arrived asking Bill, the only missionary without an established post, to proceed to Cali at once. In Cali, Sanford Johnson, a veteran missionary from Bill's home area whom he had known as a boy, was gravely ill with cancer. Bill remembered Sanford Johnson in those early years; he had been a Jehovah's Witness and had often tried to convert him to their faith. But Sanford's wife became Pentecostal, and soon he followed, channeling his indefatigable enthusiasm into the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bill had enough money to take the plane, so leaving Ruth, who was pregnant again (with twins), he was on his way southwest. For the first time he began to see the size and beauty of Colombia—its deserts, mountains, and lush forests.

Cali, the provincial capital of Valle del Cauca (valley of the river Cauca), was a beautiful city itself. Set among the hills, it was cooler than Cartagena at night. Bill noticed that the people were more Spanish or mestizos (mixed blood) and less colored than the people on the north coast.

These impressions were quickly lost, however, when he saw Sanford. The small, slightly built man had shrunk. Lying on the mud floor of the house, which was not much more than a two-roomed concrete shell, the missionary evoked all the pioneering spirit and dedication of an earlier century.

In the larger room, which was to have been a chapel, Sanford had used his last strength to build wooden pews. The other room, in which he now lay, served both as kitchen and bedroom, its functions divided by a curtain. The Johnsons had never been able even to begin services, and now Bill could see that the man was close to death. Stifling tears, he tried to be cheerful. Sanford greeted him weakly but happily. His wife, drained and wearied, bore herself bravely. Without strength to reminisce much, Sanford soon spoke

about Cali:

“Brother Billy, I want you, when you get the chance, to take a trip into the mountains, up to where the three crosses are. I want you to look up the valley. Once I stood there in prayer and had a vision of a great revival that was going to take place in this valley.” Sanford slid off into sleep.

Bill lay down and slept beside him while his wife went to sleep, exhausted, in the other room. Early in the morning Bill felt cold and was awakened by the low moans of his companion. He leaned over him and saw that he had taken a turn for the worse. Sanford grabbed his hand and pulled Bill towards him.

“Don’t forget the vision. I believe this burden will fall on you, and I believe God is going to use you. You are young, you are full of life, you have the message, your life is stirred by the Spirit of God. I can leave this with you and be happy. . . .” Within minutes Sanford was dead.

By Colombian law, the dead had to be buried within twenty-four hours, so hasty preparations were made for the funeral. With little in the way of ceremony (Bill’s Spanish was not up to it) and with hardly a soul attending, Sanford Johnson was buried.

It was decided that it was better for Sister Johnson to return to Cartagena with Bill, while he made plans to return to Cali as soon as possible. That night he walked the streets, praying that God would keep Sanford’s vision in his memory. The next day he went to the top of the mountain to the three crosses and looked down the valley. It was late afternoon when he got there, and the great crosses cast long shadows over the houses and trucks below. At least four of the larger cities of the Valle could be seen, as well as many smaller ones. Bill, too, caught a vision—the vision that he had first seen in Germany; a great flame of revival swept the valley. He spoke in tongues again as he had done during the war.

“O God, I know that it is only You who is able to bring the revival.”

This valley was part of his destiny.

Lateral communication was very difficult in Colombia, and there was no possibility of driving to Cali, so Ruth and Sister Johnson took an airplane, along with little Gerald, while Bill put their car and baggage on a boat, to travel via the Panama Canal.

It was almost night when the ladies arrived at the house, and without their men they felt nervous and lonely. A neighbor gave them some hot soup and told them about the most recent outbreak of violence, in which many innocent people had been killed in the country districts nearby. Apprehensively, they made a bed by putting two benches together in the chapel, which had no windows, making it the safest place. It would be their bed for several weeks. At night sleep would not come: the noise of people running, screaming, and the sound of flying bullets kept them awake. In the morning came the shocking news: Eighty-seven people had been killed on the streets of Cali that night. A curfew was announced—everybody had to be inside by six P.M. Things continued like that for some time, but once Bill arrived back they felt a little more relaxed. Sister Johnson stayed with them their first few years in Cali, before returning to Canada. She, too, was determined to see the vision fulfilled.



Bill in front of the old Pentecostal church in St. Stephen, New Brunswick. He was the young people's leader at the time.



Bill and Ruth at the time of the tent meetings in Chatham, New Brunswick.



The corner house was Bill and Ruth's first home in Cali, where the twins were born and where God gave a mighty revival.



Rosalba (left) was the first to enter the house in Cali to listen to the gospel and to accept the Lord. Alicia (right) was Martin's widow.



Bill with Eduardo Garcia, the first official pastor in Cali.



The three crosses on the mountain just outside the city of Cali.



Bill with his little boys; Gerald was three and a half, and the twins, Wynn and Wayne, were six months.

CHAPTER Thirteen

The Break

All hope of the vision seemed to have fled. As the new decade approached, together with the Colombian presidential election, the violence became so bad that no gathering of more than two people was allowed, even in daylight. The Johnsons' house was hopelessly inadequate, and months of searching had failed to find alternative accommodation. On top of everything, Ruth's baby was almost due, and the indications were that she would have twins.

Bill prayed and fasted in desperation. Shortly after that he met a man at the post office who spoke to him in broken English. The man was friendly, rare in those days, as the people believed Protestants to be no better than atheists. On hearing of their need for a house that could also be used for a church, he told them of one belonging to a lawyer neighbor of his. They went to see it and were delighted to find it suitable; the bottom floor could easily be converted to hold about one hundred people. The lawyer, who had been in the United States and was a reasonable man, agreed to rent it.

The babies were due the day they moved in. Almost a month later they were still due, and Ruth had become very sick. They took her to the hospital. The doctor, knowing Bill's reputation and fear of his wife's treatment in their hands, kindly invited him into the operating theater, where a Cesarean was necessary. Two boys were born, but the first was so black and lifeless that after he was given oxygen without responding, the doctor handed him hopelessly to Bill. Bill immediately got down on his knees and cried out for God to spare the life of his boy.

The boy lived to become a missionary himself in Central America. They called him Wynn. The other child was also very sick, though not as severely as Wynn, and would live to become a missionary in South America. They called him Wayne.

Ruth still remained critically ill. In anticipation of holding services,

they had brought the benches Sanford had made for his house; the devil tormented Bill with the thought that they would be using them first to conduct Ruth's funeral. She recovered, however, and two months after the twins were born, curfew having been lifted, they planned to start services.

The house was nicely situated on a corner block, with trees on either side, three bedrooms, and a patio (which Bill put a roof on to use as the kitchen, since the two main rooms were now to be used for a chapel). Nevertheless, things became extremely unpleasant.

The neighbors treated them as scum. Gerald had his arm out of the window one morning, sleeping, when he suddenly began screaming. A passing neighborhood woman had pinched him horribly, a result of the religious bigotry taught by those who for generations had been seeking to keep their hold over the people, so typical of Colombia in those days. But the iron grip was about to break.

In May they opened the door for church, putting the benches around the wall. The congregation consisted of four people: Sister Johnson, Bill, Ruth, and Gerald. Nevertheless they tried to conduct a full service and listened to Bill preach in his inadequate Spanish. Ruth had a young Colombian lady, Eloisa, living in the house to help her. Though from a Presbyterian family—rare indeed—she was afraid to attend services. Day after day there was no response. The only bright spot was the twins. The little blond boys melted the hearts of their neighbors once they could be persuaded to come and look at them. While the boys were still tiny, Bill and Ruth took the risk of leaving them outside in the pram, and unlike Gerald, they received only affectionate pats on the head. The Lord used them to break a lot of ice.

Though there was no congregation, things were lively—fearfully lively. What Protestant ministers there were did not dare venture out even to go to the shops; they just sent their house girls along. But not Bill. Not that he was fearless—many times he was sick with fear. But he knew that he had to face reality if anything was going to be accomplished, and that if the people they won were to be persecuted, then they too must stand with them in the front line of fire. People laughed at his Spanish, but his pride had been thrown away—along with the gold ring—long ago. That indeed was the

very least of it. Bill became notorious. Everywhere he went he was spotted, booed, hounded, hissed, spat upon, and made fun of . . . after all he did not believe in the virgin or the holy church. He tried to witness at every opportunity, but always without result.

It was hard to say where the most fear was: inside church or outside. The nightly meetings were always encounters—sometimes as many as two or three hundred people would be outside the ever-open door, peering in, egging each other on, throwing stones, and shouting interruptions. They would chorus together, “No queremos protestantes.” (“We don’t want Protestants.”) Every other minute one would show how brave he was by running in, yelling something nasty, and running out again. Controlled nerves, courage, patience, perseverance, love, understanding—it took all they had . . . and all that God could give them.

After some time, a young woman braved the tormentors and slid through the door, sitting on the edge of a bench at the back. She did this for a week or two before making any commitment. Her name was Rosalba; she was slim and short with thoughtful, inquiring eyes that devoured the messages. The messages! Bill toiled over them, writing out what he wanted to say first in English. Then, slowly and laboriously, with the aid of textbooks, he translated them into Spanish. After all his work, he was often made so nervous by the interrupting mob that it was impossible to make out anything coherent. If only he could speak Spanish as well as Ruth . . . But for all his poor Spanish, he spoke without hesitation whenever the situation presented itself. Falteringly and inaccurately perhaps, but still, he spoke. And the people certainly knew his message.

One thing brought them grudging respect, and that was their identification with the people, who were either rich or poor—there was no middle class to speak of. In the country areas especially, the people lived in little more than shacks; but Bill always tried to be natural, at ease, and friendly without any trace of patronage, treating the people as he would his friends back home. It meant foregoing some of the things they could have had, but what was that compared to the cause? Other missionaries rationalized their attitudes. Not Bill. Still . . . where were the results?

After Rosalba was baptized, one or two others began trickling in.

Eloisa took courage, came to the services, and was baptized in Jesus' name, after which one or two of her friends and relatives began attending. About the same time a poor local mother, whose daughter had the fatal twenty-four-hour dysentery, brought her along for prayer. The Lord healed her.

Facing the ridicule and hostility of the crowd every time they came to service took much courage for the Colombians, and much was discouraging. Of the eight or nine who came, only a few had received the Holy Spirit or been baptized, and some had not even repented. Of the odd man who attended, one had not only been hateful and cantankerous but a murderer also.

While Bill was feeling low, a letter arrived from a friend in Texas, telling him what wonderful things God was doing in the "latter rain" movement (supposedly the great and last move of the Spirit) and inviting him over to "get in on it." The friend offered to pay his fare.

This is how I can get new inspiration, thought Bill. This is the answer.

"Honey," he said, "I'm going to take Gerald to the mountain to pray—I believe I'll be going to Texas."

This time he went, not to ask God but inform Him. Little Gerald played and ran around while Bill bowed his head.

"God, here I am. . . . I want You to know that I'm going to Texas, and I thank You that You are going to help me. Amen."

Man proposes but God disposes.

"What are you going there for?" the Spirit impressed him.

"Lord, that I might know You," replied Bill.

"You will know Me through my Word," said the Spirit.

That didn't seem like much encouragement to go to Texas or anywhere else.

“Lord,” said Bill thoughtfully, “I know you are going to do something. . . .”

When he returned to the house, Ruth saw Bill’s face shining. “Well, what happened to you?” she exclaimed.

“Oh, God has visited me, and I believe He is going to move here without me having to go to the States. He is going to bless us,” he added with authority.

That night they had nine Colombians present. The meeting came under a powerful unction of the Spirit, and from the front Bill had a vision of a flame, floating down like a golden leaf and sitting upon the head of the murderer, who began speaking into tongues. The man’s son, sitting on the opposite side of the room, also saw the vision, received the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in tongues himself. That night seven were baptized in the Holy Ghost. A few days later at the women’s meeting, others received the Spirit. Within three weeks, more than twenty people had received the Holy Spirit and spoken in tongues. The revival was on.

CHAPTER Fourteen

Enter Eucaris, Submit Saul

As the revival gathered strength, so did the persecution. Sometimes the neighbors put their dogs on the Protestants as they walked down the street, while many from the established religious order, feeling threatened, did all they could to stop the revival.

Politically, the country was in turmoil. Laureano Gomez, an ultraconservative, back from Ecuadorian exile and extremely pro-clerical, was elected president. Things drifted into civil war of sorts—the Conservatives blaming it on Liberal encouragement, and the Liberals replying that it was “bandit” reaction against the government’s rotten record. It went from bad to worse. In country and mountain districts, people were especially threatened, often being the “meat” between the contending factions, while the government was suspicious that the sympathies of the poor lay with the “bandits.”

Many mountain people around Cali left their homes or farms and came to the city to live, believing it would be safer. Having suffered so much fear and horror, many were glad to give their lives to Jesus, and it was from this group that the growth really began. After a time, some returned to their homes and relatives, taking the gospel with them in a blaze of enthusiasm and telling of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Meanwhile, the neighbors grew incensed at the worshiping crowd, which was growing steadily. They got a petition to make them stop and gave it to the landlord, but he would have none of it and allowed them to continue. When that didn’t work, they took to coming right up to Bill in the meetings with a pistol, ordering him to stop. He looked down the gun barrel and continued, though shaking at the knees, in his broken Spanish.

A cherubic, dark-eyed girl of seventeen called Eucaris was among the mountain people. She was radiant with joy and a great witness. She became heavily burdened for her relatives, and it wasn’t long

before she wanted to go back to La Morena to speak to them.

“Sister Drost,” she said after the meeting one night, “will you help me pray for guidance? I feel that I want to go up to the mountain to speak to my family.”

“Why, sure,” Ruth replied. “We’ll be praying about it right away.”

Ruth felt a bit apprehensive. The people in La Morena were latter-day Robin Hoods—without the influence of Friar Tuck—and they feared nothing. Later on she spoke to Bill. “What do you think about Eucaris going back to speak to her people? She thinks she wants to go and asked us to pray with her.”

Bill thought about it a little while. It was unlikely that they could ever get up there, and unless someone was well known, there was a good chance that he would never get out again. Eucaris was known and, being just a girl, presented no threat to anybody. “Well, she’s quite young, so I don’t see that any harm can come to her if she goes up there. I’ll pray about it, though, and speak to her later.”

Not feeling any check of the Spirit, he looked down on the petite Eucaris a few nights later. She was without physical strength—not much more than a girl—yet in the Spirit she was resolute, dauntless, powerful. She looked back at him, completely unaware of her Joan of Arc aura. “Eucaris, I believe that if you want to go up to the mountain, it will be OK. God bless, and . . . we’ll be praying for you.”

She smiled joyfully, “Praise the Lord!” and soon she was off.

Eucaris had no packing problems, since she had very little to pack. Singing one of the choruses she’d learned at the church, she got her little bundle together happily, feeling full of the Spirit. She was determined to share her joy with the people back home, and nothing was going to stop her—not even her cousin Saul.

Saul was a singular man. He too had determination; it was a family trait. Tall, lean, muscular, shrewd, and totally fearless, he was more or less king of his territory. He was a bachelor in his early thirties and owned the Last Chance Saloon, the only bar in that mountain

vastness. By supplying liquor on credit when customers couldn't afford it, he had craftily gotten everybody to feel indebted to him. As all business was discussed in his bar, nothing escaped his notice. Nobody had any secrets from Saul, and everybody feared him.

The bar itself stood alone, as remote as a secluded saloon in old Mexico, except instead of being set in a dusty plain it had a magnificent outlook over the Valle. It was a low, ramshackle wooden affair, with a long verandah and a rail to tie horses to. Saul lived there alone.

Up, up, up plodded Eucaris, up through the banana plantations, up through the winding paths of the coffee plantations, praying persistently that God would help her speak to the people. Many recognized and greeted her as she went along, inquiring how she was. Almost everybody had become interrelated in one way or another. She used the opportunity to mention her experience and invite the people to a meeting she planned to hold in her parents' house.

The mountain folk, for all their wildness, were spontaneous, open, and curious. There was nothing much else to distract them. They would be coming along—not only out of curiosity but because the Spirit of God was brooding over that place.

By a strange coincidence, the usually well-informed cousin Saul was unaware that Eucaris was back and having an evangelistic session the same night.

As evening came, scores of people slowly made their way from their scattered homes to the meeting. Eucaris felt a little overwhelmed when she saw the crowd but said a quick prayer and began singing in her sweet, Latin voice, accompanying herself on the guitar. Later she would explain just how she had met Hermano Drost, been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and spoken in tongues, thus finding tremendous joy in serving the Lord. In the meantime, feeling a powerful anointing, she continued singing and teaching songs to the crowd. Cousin Saul, she noted, was absent.

All afternoon Saul had felt edgy . . . it wasn't like him. Something was wrong; he could feel it in his bones, but he couldn't put his

finger on it. It had not been a bad day, and that made things even worse; there was no reason to feel the way he did. He had spent the best part of the day down the valley, looking at a piece of property, and he had hurried back to open the bar. He looked forward to being with his cronies.

No doubt he would soon discover why he felt the way he did, he thought, as he checked his pistols and placed them back in position under the bar. Seven o'clock came—the time when men usually began drifting in—but nobody arrived. He went outside and sniffed the air like a wild horse; no clues came. He listened intently for the sound of feet breaking through undergrowth—nothing. He peered through the gloom in the direction of tracks up the mountain—deserted. Returning to the bar he impatiently polished some glasses, keeping his face towards the door and placing another pistol close by under the rough wooden bar top . . . just in case. His mind went through reasons why he should be alone: Was somebody planning a takeover? But if so, why hadn't at least one of his lieutenants warned him? That thought he dismissed. Had there been an accident? While pondering these things, he heard the sound of hooves outside; after seeing that the rider was unarmed, he ran outside. "Hey, what's going on; where is everybody tonight?" he shouted.

The rider stopped.

"Oh, haven't you heard? Everybody's at the gospel meeting that girl is holding!"

"What gospel meeting? What girl?" Saul demanded, surprised.

"Young Eucaris—your cousin. She was in Cali . . . found religion . . . something about being able to speak another language. Anyway everybody is there to listen to her. I'm just on my way." And off he rode into the night.

So that was it! Saul was wild. Eucaris, his smart bit of a cousin, was playing the big shot because she'd been to Cali! Who did she think she was anyway? He'd soon fix her. . . . Saul ran back into the bar, put on double holsters, quickly made ready his horse, and tore down the mountain track furiously, determined to settle this

nonsense. Religion—he'd soon show them!

Approaching the house, he saw many animals tied outside in the moonlight. Instantly he dismounted, tethering his horse to a branch with a quick flick. Glancing through the window, he took in the situation. Sure enough his cousin was there—she seemed to be praying or something—with people who were kneeling down. Now was the time. Pulling himself up to his full height and throwing his chest out, he barged through the door with his shoulder in a dramatic entrance, hands on pistols.

But that was as far as he got.

Eucaris had never felt such a spirit of evangelism. She recited all she had seen happen in Cali and preached a down-to-earth message on the love of God and the need to repent. As she told simple stories, the folks came under tremendous conviction. Some were weeping; many were getting right with God. Eucaris wept with them, praying earnestly for God to baptize them with His Spirit.

At that moment Saul came in with a bang. Startled, Eucaris took in the situation and prayed that God would stop Saul from ruining the meeting.

Saul couldn't move. He stood transfixed at the door, dazed and confused. It was like he was in a dream; nothing would move, not an arm, not a finger, not an eyelid. He could have been enclosed in warm, transparent steel. People in the room continued kneeling in prayer. Suddenly, in the atmosphere, he felt tremendously unclean. His cousin came towards him in seeming slow motion; she looked radiantly beautiful, and she looked . . . clean. The dark eyes of Eucaris looked at him from unplumbed depths, with a tenderness he had never seen the like of. It was as though some other force was in those eyes. Saul wilted as he looked into them. She put her hands on his head, and he felt fire go through him as she said, "You need Jesus."

At that moment, released from the force that held him, he dropped to his knees. He could do no more. All he wanted to do was cry and confess and be free from the horror of his condition, to find the beauty he perceived about him. Saul stayed there a long time.

When he did get up, the first thing he did was to go back to his bar and pour all his liquor down the mountainside. He was through with it. Forever.



Bill and Ruth with Gerald, nearly six, and Wynn and Wayne, almost three.



Bill at the “Boca del Monte,” ready to start on his first trip up to La Morena. The girl, Eucaris, was the first person to take the gospel to the mountain people.



CHAPTER Fifteen

La Morena: First Love

That was the story Bill heard, excitedly related to him by Eucaris on her return. She insisted that he go up to La Morena, as everybody was waiting for him and many wanted to be baptized in Jesus' name. Bill felt a bit nervous about going—not only because of the dreadful violence in those places but also because he felt inadequate in Spanish. But Eucaris was adamant, and feeling God's sanction, Bill relented. Eucaris sent word to expect them.

Early one Monday morning, after a busy Sunday and a late night, they boarded the bus for Tulua, about three hours' journey from Cali. There they transferred to a smaller bus for another hour's journey to Boca del Monte, "the Mouth of the Mountain." There was little at Boca other than an isolated wooden inn, well-known because it marked the beginning of the journey for those going into the high country. If passengers on the bus had looked at Bill curiously, they stared outright when he got off at the inn.

Eucaris shepherded him to a rope bridge that crossed a river about a hundred yards wide. Bill felt like Tarzan as he tiptoed out alone, the bridge dancing high over the turbulent torrent below, to join Eucaris on the other side. He was really getting into the sticks this time. A group of people straddling mules greeted him warmly on the other side and beckoned him to get onto a mule they had waiting. It was the first time he had ridden a mule, and the animal seemed to know it. After putting leather chaps over his trousers to protect his legs from the dense undergrowth, they set off up the narrow paths.

"How far is it?" Bill asked.

"Oh, just up there," they answered, vaguely pointing to the top of the mountain.

They traveled and traveled. In parts the terrain was thickly wooded, in parts banana or coffee plantation. Sometimes the track was just the width of a man, and sometimes a precipice plunged from its

side far to the valley below. Bill hoped the mule was more steady than he was in driving it. People stopped them along the way, mountain style, for a talk. It seemed that everybody knew him. After returning warm greetings, he invited them to come to the meeting that night.

About the middle of the day the sun grew very hot, and they were still climbing upward. By now Bill felt as though he had been kicked by the mule, instead of riding it. Again he asked, "How far is it?"

Once more they pointed to the top of the mountain. "Just up there. You see those white blossoms on that tree, way up there?" On and on they went until late afternoon.

About seven that evening Bill stood eating off a shelf in the home of Eucaris. He wasn't too anxious to sit. After finishing the meal he lay exhausted on a bag of coffee. By seven-thirty people began arriving, and soon he was amazed to see more than two hundred gathered, waiting in the dusk. The Lord helped him speak, and the Holy Spirit so moved that some were still praying at midnight. Bill told those who wanted to be baptized to wait a day or two so he could explain to them the Scriptures concerning it.

Early the following morning a man came up to him as he was shaving. "I want to be baptized, but I'm not sure I can be," he said.

"Oh, why not?" asked Bill.

"You see, I have three wives."

Bill was shocked; the man looked quite young. "You have three wives," he repeated, letting it digest.

"Yes, but I don't know which one to leave and which one to take. It seems to me I will have to make a decision."

Having never before come across a problem like that, Bill didn't know what to tell the man. "Wait until tomorrow, and I will let you know," he counseled.

That night, after another good service, he took his flashlight and

went out into the coffee bushes. Kneeling down on the cool ground he placed his Bible before him and, after praying a long time, said, "God, there is something in Your Word that will settle this, I know. I don't know where it is. . . . You will have to help me."

He let the Bible lay open and his eyes lighted upon words from Revelation: "first love."

Bill thought, This can't be for the fellow; this is talking to the church.

He put the flashlight out and waited in the darkness further. Then, "Lord, reveal to me what You want."

Again he let the Bible fall open. Once more, "first love" was before his eyes. "Lord, I don't know, but this is what You have given me," he concluded, "so I will tell the man."

Julio was waiting for him at six-thirty when he came to shave. "What is the answer?"

"I'm sorry," Bill apologized, "but I can't get anything else, only these two words: first love."

"That's it!" Julio exclaimed.

"What?" asked Bill, intrigued.

"I'm glad the Lord has shown you, because the first wife was the one I loved, but she has left me," he said. "I must go and get her if I can and try to bring her back, so that we can live a Christian life." Julio, absolutely convinced that God had revealed the solution to Bill, left immediately. On Thursday he returned, and this was his story:

Julio had a problem. His first wife had, as far as he knew, gone to the city of Pereira and had become a confirmed harlot. Sure enough, he found her on one of the sleazy thoroughfares where the prostitutes waited, leaning against a doorway.

"Well, if it isn't my old man!" she exclaimed in surprise. "What do you want—have you got the price?"

He told her he was through with the old life and had become a Christian. She laughed and mocked him, refusing to speak to him further. If he wanted her, he needed the price.

Julio went back to his hotel room and prayed God would give him grace and move on her. At a later hour he went back. She was still there. This time he persuaded her to go and eat with him, and over the meal he told her in depth all that had happened. In the end, his first love agreed to return with him to La Morena. Julio ended by saying that she would be at the meeting.

Before preaching Bill announced a baptismal service for the following day. The Spirit moved mightily again, and Julio's first love broke down in tears of repentance. She wanted to be baptized, as did Julio's other wives.

But what about the four children by the other two? Who was going to take care of them? How could they afford to keep them if they separated from Julio?

"There is no problem," said the first wife. "I will take care of them and be a mother to them. They can come and live with me."

La Morena means "brown-skinned woman." Julio's first love could have been named after the mountain. La Morena would always be the first love of the revival, and drive it forward.

It is an hour's walk at least, for somewhere to baptize, thought Bill early, lying on his coffee bag.

Then he had a vision. He saw a white horse; beside it a short, fat man with a red face; and in front of the man a pool with ducks swimming on it. He was so impressed that he told the people.

"Oh, we know who that is," one told him. "That is the man we all work for, Señor Fandiño."

"But what about this pool of water?"

"He has a pool, but be warned—he is not in favor of the gospel."

"Never mind. Tell me where he lives."

“About five minutes’ walk from here.”

Bill sent a young man to tell Señor Fandiño that he wished to speak to him. Soon he was standing before the man he had seen in the vision, who knew of him.

“May we use your pool to baptize some people, Señor Fandiño?” he asked politely.

“Why do you want to baptize them? Were they not all baptized when they were children?”

“No, this is a baptism unto repentance,” explained Bill. “Now if you don’t understand, sir, and you can wait . . .”

“Oh no, I’m leaving now,” Señor Fandiño cut in.

“You wait,” Bill encouraged him. “I can hear them coming now.”

With that, almost a hundred people, having heard about the visit, came down the mountain path and stood around the pool, waiting for baptism. Excusing himself, Bill got into the water and commenced telling them just why they were being baptized. After a short time Señor Fandiño shouted in English, “Wait! Mister!” He continued, red faced, “Can I be baptized?”

“If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you have repented, you sure can be baptized,” replied Bill.

With that, Señor Fandiño ran into the house and returned in his pajamas, ready for baptism. Bill baptized him in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Señor Fandiño came out of the water baptized in the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues. In fact, he was so filled with the Spirit that for four or five days he could hardly speak a word in Spanish; he just worshiped and worshiped. But he did stop long enough to give orders to slaughter calves for a big feast. About three hundred souls gathered around the verandah of his large home, worshiping, eating together, and having a wonderful time.

Many times in the future they would make the journey up the forbidding mountain to stay at Señor Fandiño’s with him. Saul, the former saloon owner, would eventually become pastor of the Cali

church.

As the revival gathered momentum, Bill was faced with the problem of not having enough workers. Men had to be given field commissions of a sort, and much time was spent in helping them. In Cali's widely-spaced suburbs two other house meetings were taking place, while La Morena's many believers required frequent visits. In the Valle other towns began to catch the flame, as converts told relatives of their experiences. The busy, busy years had begun. Soon Bill was the pastor of preachers as well as people. In the many unreached towns, humble house meetings with a handful of converts were the beginnings of great churches. In Cali alone would be fourteen self-supporting churches—all having their origins in the lonely shell where Sanford Johnson died.

In La Morena one day, Bill was baptizing when a notoriously evil man came up to him, deeply convinced that he wanted to be baptized but feeling that he must first go and be reconciled with a bitter enemy down the mountain. They had taken mutual oaths to kill each other on sight if they ever met again, and they meant it. Both went everywhere armed. Bill told him they would band together and pray while he went down, by faith, to see his foe. The man got on horseback unarmed, pale with fear as he pressed down the path, but determined to make peace. He came to the property of his enemy, who soon sighted him. Raising his revolver, his enemy shouted, "Don't come any closer or I'll shoot. You know my promise!"

"Listen to me!" shouted back the other. "I'm a new man and have become a Christian. I want to make peace with you!"

The enemy stood for while, looking carefully, thinking, and noting that his foe was indeed unarmed. The Christian prayed hard. Finally, in this spiritual high noon, the enemy lowered his gun. Slowly they came closer. When they did stand eye to eye, God so moved on them that they both returned up the mountain to be baptized.

"Hermano Drost," a distraught new convert came to tell him one day, "you must come quickly! My wife is doing crazy things. She thinks she is a new prophetess."

They quickly went to one of the poorer suburbs of Cali, about half an hour from the house where they held meetings. Bill got more details on the way. The woman had been fasting. Well, that was OK if she were led of God. But this woman had done it in the wrong spirit and had become insane.

If Satan cannot push people back into sin, he tries to discredit and destroy them by pushing them into fanaticism, and it seemed he had succeeded here. The woman, a strong character at any time, had commanded her room to be cleared of every bit of furniture, except for a white piece of paper in the middle of the room. She stood on this, her “throne,” naked as some new Eve, “prophesying.”

When Bill entered the room she threw her hands into the air, making weird noises. He recognized satanic activity.

“Come out of her, you devil!” Bill commanded.

She was delivered. The people wrapped a sheet around her, and later the woman became a good worker.

Meanwhile, up in La Morena, Señor—now Hermano (“Brother”)—Fandiño was looking after the work. Bill had to go on a troubleshooting trip as quickly as possible. The troubling tale was that Brother Fandiño was whipping the whole church and wouldn’t stop. He was, he told the church, “whipping them in the Spirit.” That was a new one to Bill. When asked why he did this Fandiño replied, “Why, is it not written, whom the Lord loveth he scourgeth?” Bill explained that he had taken the passage of Scripture a bit too literally. This put an end to the “whipping in the Spirit.”

If inside the church there were problems, outside the persecution grew worse. Stonings, threatenings, and disturbed meetings were commonplace. A nasty night occurred in the house of Fandiño not long after. Bill had been threatened with death numerous times and had looked down the barrel of a revolver more times than he had eaten in good restaurants, but he had not yet slept beside an assassin. He was now to have that privilege. One of the rooms in the large home had been allocated for him to sleep in, alone, and he was just getting ready for bed when an armed character whom he

did not know entered the room.

“You don’t mind if I sleep here with you, do you?” he asked. It struck Bill that it would not matter if he did mind. There was no point in asking who the man was, either. The stranger was dark, mean looking, and edgy. It was important that he show no fear.

“Why, not at all . . . make yourself at home!” he added, pointing to a space on the floor.

The intruder spread a grass mat on the floor in the usual manner. He seemed very nervous and placed his gear carefully on the floor, as if to be able to get everything quickly in the dark. Bill too made a slow show of settling down for the night.

“Now you’re sure you don’t mind?” the intruder reiterated, looking at him with a puzzled expression.

“Oh, no! There’s plenty of room here,” Bill replied expansively. The stranger could not grasp his coolness. “You’re sure you don’t mind?” he asked again in amazement.

“Why, of course not! No problem at all!” Bill reassured him. He wished he could feel the same reassurance when he switched the lights out and lay in the blackness, praying. He prayed until the early dawn light filtered into the room . . . there was no sign of the stranger.

How he had slipped out without being noticed Bill could not figure. There was something about the mentality of these people that unhinged them when one did not fear death. Sadly, though it unhinged them, it did not always stop them.

CHAPTER Sixteen

Close Encounters of the Clink Kind

New Christians were spreading the gospel everywhere when word came from the Galicia mountain district that two young men had been thrown into prison for testifying. The parents of the boys asked if Bill would intercede before the authorities. He set off for Florida—a town as wild and primitive as its namesake had been centuries earlier—with some trepidation. The bandits there could have taught the old pirate Henry Morgan a trick or two. After hours of riding in ramshackle buses and finally an equally ramshackle taxi, Bill entered the town to find the people on holiday. It was a religious festival day in honor of Mary. Bill went straight to the police station, where the boys were being held in the lockup. He explained to the officer (not that such a description of the man behind the desk really suited him) that he had come to do what he could for the two boys.

The policeman was antagonistic and pulled over a statue. “Do you believe in the virgin?” he demanded.

“Yes.” Bill replied, “I believe in the virgin.”

“Do you believe this is the virgin?”

“No, this is an image.”

Just at that a priest came in, furious to find Bill there and speaking as he did. “Take care of this fellow!” he ordered the policeman and left the room.

The priest went immediately to his church, announcing over the loudspeaker that the Protestant foreigner was there and was going to die. He ordered all buses and taxis not to convey Bill or the youths out of town, and a crowd began to congregate in the large square outside the lockup. The policeman kept them until the trap was set; then he handed over the two youths to Bill, saying they were free to go.

As they stepped outside, the mob began to yell and curse them. A man came over and put his hand in Bill's mouth, stretching it menacingly. "Kill him! Kill him!" shouted the mob.

Another man came over with a huge rock in both hands. "I'll kill you, you filthy Protestant!" he said and heaved the rock at him.

Bill ducked. The rock arched through the air and hit the head of a boy nearby, who crumpled. "You've killed my boy! You've killed my boy!" his mother screamed at the man, frantically trying to stem the flow of blood from a great gash.

At that moment a taxi pulled in, having arrived from another town. Bill saw the opportunity to flee, ushered the youths into the back seat, and sat beside the driver, winning his favor. The driver agreed to take them out, but just as he was about to pull off, two policemen who had been talking with the priest ran over and jumped beside them, one in the front seat and one in the back. They stuck their guns in the ribs of Bill and the youths while the driver started off down the mountain. Halfway down the police ordered the driver to pull over and stop. He firmly refused and accelerated faster, taking the bends at high speed. Bill and the young men stayed very calm.

"Aren't you afraid to die?" asked the policeman next to him.

"Of course I'm not afraid to die; I have eternal life," Bill returned coolly. The man was amazed.

At the next town the taxi driver put them all out, refusing to go on any further. Unable to kill them in the open, the policemen left. Bill sent his two companions to manage as best they could—it was safer for them without his company when they could blend into the local scene. Unable to get transport out of town, Bill found a room for the night.

He had hardly lain down to sleep when the owner brought him the urgent warning, "Mister, they know where you are, and they are coming to get you! You better try to get out the back way."

Fortunately he was still clothed. He quickly thanked the man and

dashed out, climbing over a wall into the darkness of the back alley. Now he could hear the sound of men and horses, and suddenly one appeared at the alley's far end.

"Here he is!" exclaimed the rider as he began galloping down. Bill fled the other way, into bushes that led into the forest. Here his army training proved useful as he hugged the ground. The sound of men and horses was soon about; at times the horses were so close he could smell their breath. The men would shout excitedly, "Over here! Over here!" without really knowing where he was. He slipped deeper into the bushes when the horsemen were not too close. Eventually they went far enough away that he moved deeper into the forest without being seen.

There was no moon, and little starlight filtered through the leafy canopy above him. He was lost. Heart pounding with excitement, he headed in what he thought to be the right direction. An hour or so had gone by since he had entered the forest when he heard the sound of the river. This, Bill knew, would bring him to the road, so he followed it, taking care to stay hidden. After a time he came to the highway and lay prone in the undergrowth. The odd vehicle came and went, but those going away from Florida he could not trust.

Bill was still wondering what to do when a truck carrying drums of oil stopped before the bridge, and the driver got out to check that his load was well tied. Seeing his moment, Bill waited till the driver was back in the cab and jumped, undetected, onto the back, hiding between the oil barrels. The truck rumbled down the winding road, the barrels rocking so wildly that he was afraid they would tip and flatten him. Sometime later the vehicle slowed, and peering forward, Bill could see a checkpoint ahead. He jumped off into the forest again before the truck stopped, but he was unable to get on again since the guard stood watching. There was nothing to do but go back into the forest and walk parallel to the road. Morning had long broken when he reached the next town, where he got a taxi home.

Ruth was aghast when she saw her bloodstained husband enter the house, but Bill could not tell her anything. Emotionally and physically exhausted, he dropped on the bed and cried like a baby

before falling into a deep, long sleep.

The following day, local police came with false accusations they had received from their mountain colleagues, and Bill was taken before the judge, who ordered him not to return to Florida. He had not been planning to. The two youths escaped for the moment. One was later shot and killed while spreading the gospel in another place. Today, ironically, there is a large Pentecostal church in Florida.

A surprising sequel to this story came about two months later. Driving down the main highway one day, Bill noticed a car stopped by the roadside. The passengers seemed to need help, so he pulled over to see what he could do. The men gave him a curious look when he asked if he could help them but replied that maybe he could. Bill was bending over the engine when one asked, “You don’t know me, do you?”

Bill looked up at him and thought, Why, no, I don’t think so, and returned to looking at the engine.

“You don’t remember who I am, but I remember who you are,” the man went on. “You’re the man we tried to kill on the journey down from Galicia that day.” Looking up in wonder, Bill almost hit his head on the hood.

The man continued in a matter-of-fact tone. “The priest had paid us to kill you while we were in a solitary place. When we tried to get the driver to stop, you seemed so fearless, and we thought it really wasn’t much fun to kill a man unafraid to die. You amazed us. We couldn’t understand you; you seemed so strange, so different from other people we had tried to kill before.”

“But what about the horsemen that came after me?”

“That wasn’t us. The priest had sent them on ahead to get you, in case we did not.”

Bill spoke of their need to find the Lord before they parted on a cordial enough note—like people who had met before at a party.

While the devil persecuted the believers, God performed healings among them. A house meeting had begun in Cartago, another city of the Valle, and Bill was encouraging it along one night when a little boy brought in his grandfather.

“My grandfather wants prayer,” said the little chap.

“Oh, what’s wrong with him?” responded Bill.

“He’s a leper.”

Looking closer, Bill could see greenish-yellow water squeezing from the old man’s face and running from around his eyes. On his head were bald patches caused by the disease.

“OK, I’ll pray for him,” he said.

Going towards him, he began praying but did not lay hands on him, thinking about the law of Moses, which told people not to touch lepers. He was feeling justified in not doing so when the Spirit spoke to him: “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

Without further hesitation he laid hands on the leprous head of the old man. The next day the boy came to say his grandfather was very happy, and healed. Bill saw him later. His hair had returned and his skin was like that of a baby.

CHAPTER Seventeen

First Convention—First Martyrs

In the complexity of Colombian politics, the Protestant Christians, being non-Catholic, were lumped in with the Liberals in the eyes of many. The Conservative party under Laureano Gomez was in power and basically supported the aspirations of the Catholic Church. Some revolutionaries backed the Liberals, but others were just bandits using political pretexts. Just to make life more complicated, some bandits were Conservatives, while others backed whoever offered the most. A near civil war prevailed. In the smaller country towns of the Valle, many died in the factional fighting. At times, killings were instigated by priests fearful of losing their grip. Though these deaths were mostly political, or pseudopolitical, arrests for preaching were increasing, and the Pentecostal Christians were soon to come under more direct attack.

A first convention was announced, to be held in Cali, and the mountain people especially looked forward to attending it. Lionel, a happy, young seventeen-year-old who was always singing, had recently been converted in La Morena. He offered to stay back and look after the farms while the people went to the convention. He would also look after Pastor, an old man of ninety-seven who had never worn shoes and was unable to go to Cali. Each day, after finishing with the animals, Lionel went to pray and read the Bible with Pastor.

On Sunday afternoon, the last day of convention, five men on horseback accosted Lionel as he left the old man's place. "Hey you, you must deny your faith and return to the church. This Bill Drost is a gangster!"

His heart was pounding, but Lionel stated calmly, "I will not deny my faith in Jesus Christ."

At this they fell upon him, tying him with a rope to the back of their horses. "Deny your faith!" they threatened.

"I will not deny my faith in Jesus Christ," Lionel resolutely replied.

“Whaaaa!” they shouted in glee and set off riding fiercely over the rough paths, dragging the boy behind them. Now and again they stopped and commanded him to deny his faith, but each time, though increasingly weaker from the battering and loss of blood, he refused. They got him at last to just below his home, where they untied him and propped his broken body up against a wall. Once more, with raised revolvers, they asked him: “Will you deny Jesus?” making no pretensions this time about his following a gangster or returning to the church.

“No, I will not,” he replied. Gathering his last strength, he added, “There is power in the blood of Jesus!”

Each bandit put a bullet in him. He was the first martyr of the Colombian revival.

The details of this story came from an eyewitness. As in the Galicia incident, Bill met a man in a bar in Cali one night a few months later, who came to him and confessed he had been one of the killers. He told Bill the whole story; he had been mightily moved by Lionel’s steadfastness.

On hearing the news, the people were shocked. Bill, putting himself in danger, went with the young man’s family to face the authorities, identify the body, and perform the funeral.

Very soon afterwards, Bill was staying at Fandiño’s farm again when anxiety overtook him about another young man called Martin. Martin had married a lovely girl named Alicia. They had a house in the remote mountain region, but no children. Both had fallen in love with Jesus and, though just humble mountain people, wanted to dedicate their lives to the work of the gospel. Without family or money, Alicia and Martin had decided between themselves that Alicia would stay in Cali and work, so she could support her husband as a full-time evangelist in the field. Ruth let them use one of their rooms, but most of the time Martin was away. God performed miracles through Martin’s ministry, and He opened new areas. Threats against his life were many, and he was often warned to stop preaching or be killed.

Early that morning, while Bill was feeling concern, a horse galloped

up to the house. The rider had a troubled face. "Late last night while Martin was preaching, somebody opened the door and shot him from the darkness outside. He fell, mortally wounded. His last words were, 'Oh, praise God! Glory be to God!' The killers got away, but they plan to come tonight to finish off the foreigner and all who follow him," the messenger finished gloomily.

Deeply upset about the death of Martin, Bill quickly scribbled a note to Ruth, sending it down with a young man. Then he began wondering and praying about what to do—whether to call off that night's service or continue. Feeling a strong assurance, he decided to go ahead with the meeting anyway.

Back in Cali, Ruth was just going out of the house—Alicia had left before her to pray in the church—when the messenger arrived from La Morena. Shocked and upset, Ruth questioned the youth closely, for notwithstanding Bill's assertion that the rest were well, she knew them to be in grave danger. With a very heavy heart, wondering how best to break the news to the young widow, she went to take charge of the service.

Alicia was still bent in prayer. Tenderly Ruth put her hand on Alicia's shoulder, her eyes glazed with tears. Alicia looked up, and a shadow of fear passed over her previously radiant face. Ruth broke the news as gently as she could, and Alicia, sobbing, went outside.

There was no singing in the meeting in Cali that night. All prayed for the safety of those in La Morena. After a time Alicia came into the service and, in the midst of choking sobs, said she felt very lonely but was surrendering her life to be a soulwinner wherever she went. This she did. Alicia never remarried but led many to eternal life. Her radiance attracted people wherever she ministered.

Meanwhile at La Morena, a great meeting was underway, full of power and glory. Mighty things happened and many were baptized in the Holy Spirit; the killers never kept their promise to show up. In the morning the believers went farther into the mountains, where Martin had been killed, for his funeral. When they got there the authorities would not allow Bill to conduct it. They followed the body out of town, watching it being slipped into a niche in the wall.

A man then approached Bill. "Are you going back into town?"

"Yes."

"Come on, we want to take you."

"Oh, I'm OK," Bill said. "I want to talk to some people."

He sensed danger all about, and the Spirit told him, "Go and don't look back." Without hesitation he turned and headed for town, walking a mile without turning behind. The man had been trying to protect him from a murder plot. When he got back to town the police were surprised—they had already received word that he had been shot! Bill and the group then left as quickly as possible.

Later, as they passed by the bottom of the mountain, somebody called out from the bar at Boca in surprise, "Are you still alive? The killers were here on horses last night, making their plans to go and clean up you all. It then started to pour with rain, and they couldn't get up the pass. It was too slippery for the horses, so they set out another way."

"They couldn't get up that way either," put in another. "The rain was too bad. They got drunk instead!"

Bill realized God had done this to protect them. He replied, "Why, we never had a drop of rain. All we had was a deluge of the Holy Spirit that is poured out on those who are hungry for God!"

Not many weeks after the death of Martin, Bill went to Sevilla, a town crouching in the mountains about four hours' drive from Cali. Alicia's mother was there, cooking for workers on a coffee plantation, and a revival had started in the home where she stayed, just below the town. Each night they held a service, with people coming from the surrounding area. Although only about ten people attended, much interest had been shown. Bill traveled by day as it was too dangerous to drive at night (not even buses would make the journey for fear of bandits), and while on a straight stretch of road he noticed a man waving to him from an oncoming bus. It was Eduardo Garcia, the man appointed to be the first official pastor of La Morena. He left the bus to join Bill, since he had been on his way

to see him.

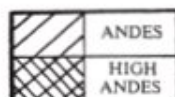
“I have some very sad news for you, Hermano Drost. Some of the brethren were murdered last night down in the house where we hold services, including Alicia’s mother. They were lined up against the wall and told to deny their faith and return to the Catholic Church. Only one man escaped to tell us. All insisted they would not, so they shot them. We must go to town to identify the bodies, but we must be careful, for there is great tension in Sevilla. And, Hermano Drost, be warned—they are not a pretty sight.”

The morgue was crowded with curious people when they arrived, and Bill could feel that many wished for the foreigner to be among the seven lying there. As Eduardo had said, it was not a pretty sight. Bill was staggered at the number of bullets that had been pumped into Alicia’s mother.

The terrorism continued. Tulua, Palmira, Cartago, Armenia, Pereira—there were open doors to hold meetings in houses in all these places as people told relatives of the gospel. But it took courage. Outside the open doors, howling, stone-throwing mobs sought to intimidate all who went inside, besides threatening the owners of the houses. Most had courage, and the martyrdoms only increased interest in the work of God, proving the old saying, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

In La Morena, however, things now became untenable, and such was the persecution that one night all the Christians fled, leaving their farms and property behind. Almost an entire mountain population vanished overnight, some going to Cali, and others to cities further along the valley. One family went to Ecuador. Later Bill counted fifteen churches that were established by the exodus of the mountain people. Like the earlier persecution in Jerusalem, it only served to spread the gospel quicker and brought an avalanche of open doors.

MAP OF COLOMBIA



CHAPTER Eighteen

Tree Tease on Doctrine

It was about the middle of 1952, but it seemed like just months since the house meetings began in Cali in the May of 1950, so busy had they been. There was hardly time to think about the successes God was giving, pressed as they were by persecution, and continually fighting fatigue. Financial resources were slender, so faith was necessary for any new venture. Indeed things were begun without their being able to see where the resources would come from. They came anyway; somehow—right on time—they came. Hoards of people ate at their table, yet the table was never bare. Scores of needs were met, often to their own discomfort, but somehow they managed.

Once another missionary complained that Bill was getting more than others (he did so much) and was surprised when he found that Bill actually received less than himself. Their home was a channel of laughter and joy as well as blessing, and unpretentious almost to the point of being self-effacing. He was as one with the Colombians, because familiarity for him held no fears, and the people loved him as one of the family.

If Bill had weaknesses he did not take himself seriously enough to try to hide them behind an aura of remoteness; neither did he seek to magnify his strengths through a mystique of super-spirituality. He was just plain, natural Bill Drost. Always on the go, always approachable, always available, always outgoing, always controlling fear. No outstanding natural gifts, whether in song or the spoken word, but full of spiritual ones by virtue of his big-hearted hold on God. Ruth complemented him by being more reflective, and he leaned on her heavily. With inner strength like a mighty oak, she could take being leaned on, not only by Bill but many others. Had you asked her, she would have admitted to being a sapling.

In the dispersion one man had gone to the beautiful city of Neiva, nestled between the mountains on the Magdalena River to the

southeast of Cali. East of Neiva, the mountains rose in noble formation to form the water divide, then plunged into the vastness of the Amazon and Orinoco Basins where remote tribes lived, and, as they had done for millennia, died without ever seeing a white settler. West of Neiva, Mount Huila clawed more than eighteen and a half thousand feet to scrape the sultry South American moon. The man who went to Neiva had been looking to other hills, from whence came his strength, and despite the usual fanatical opposition had gathered together a group of believers in his home. After repeated requests, Bill found some time to make the journey to the city of the clouds. It was a hard drive through miles of bad, high-Andean desert roads. Though only one hundred miles as the condor flies, it was more than twice that distance by car, the road first taking a big southward sweep to connect the town of Garzon. Bill arrived in the afternoon, covered in dust, but he was able to take a cold shower before service, as well as encourage the young minister.

A peaceful dusk had dropped night onto Neiva by the time the nine or ten people had arrived for the service. But, unknown to the believers, word had reached the town priest that “the foreigner” was there. The same priest was busy gathering, in traumatized haste, a band of people to put an end to the intruder “once and for all.”

Bill blithely began the meeting by singing “There Is Power in the Blood.” They hadn’t got through too many verses when a pounding started on the left wall. The adobe bricks slowly broke, and soon a mob could be seen seeking entrance. Had they come earlier they could have gotten in through the door. Simultaneously the window on the right wall was smashed, and a tempest of stones started raining in. They were caught in a classic pincers movement.

One man was hit on the head by a rock, and blood began streaming. (He would need twelve stitches to close the wound, and while this was being done he received the Holy Ghost!)

Behind Bill on the patio was a wall about nine feet high. Beyond that they could flee to safety. He beckoned the fearful new converts and, cupping his hands military style, hoisted them over the wall. In the melee his hand was damaged, so that when the time came he

could not heave himself up. The house wall was now smashed through, and people were squeezing into the building. There was nothing for him to do but turn towards the incensed mob that was bent on destroying him for bringing a false message. As he had seen in crowds before, they came forward slowly, working up courage for the kill. Suddenly whistles blew and a company of police descended, rushing up and handcuffing him. At least he was saved from being torn apart alive, he mused, as they led him to the station.

They threw him unceremoniously into a cell and locked the door. The only other inmate was a friendly dog, who seemed to want out as much as Bill did. During the night he meditated on what the morrow would bring, and the prophetic Scriptures came to him very strongly:

“Nation shall rise against nation. . . . Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted” (Matthew 24:7, 9). “Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). “Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luke 21:14-15).

The Lord then spoke to him, “For this cause have I brought you into the world.”

Though Bill thought much about his predicament, he did not think about how he would answer charges that might be brought against him.

Early in the morning he was still thinking when the doors were thrown open and he was re-handcuffed. Without so much as giving him a glass of water the police escorted him outside, leading him around the town through howling multitudes who chanted, “We don’t want Protestants! We want to get rid of Protestants!”

They let their dogs on him. The police did little to interfere. Finally they deposited him at the courthouse, where he was going to be charged.

Inside a military judge presided. The priest was there as his main

accuser, looking at him with hate-filled eyes. Bill was indicted for disturbing the peace. It seemed to Bill that outside, without his presence, the peace was still disturbed. In the court some tranquility was imposed by the army presence. Bill explained that he was not disturbing the peace, just preaching the gospel. The judge appeared to be a reasonable man and was not allowing himself to be pushed around by the priest. The priest sensed this. Afraid of losing his case, he brought a new accusation: "Señor Judge," he said with the triumphant air of an enemy bringing the charge of the unpardonable sin, "this man denies the holy beliefs!"

"Señor Judge, may I have permission to speak to the priest?" Bill asked.

It was granted.

"Señor Doctor," Bill addressed the priest with grace, "have you ever been to one of the services?" Bill knew that he hadn't.

"No." But, unwilling to be put off, he insisted, "You do deny the holy doctrines?"

Bill was neither before an ecclesiastical court, nor had the judge any capacity for the complexities of theology. Bill looked to the Lord. Then found himself saying, "Can I ask you one question?"

"Yes," the priest replied.

"I would like you to tell me what you think of that tree standing there in front of you and me, here on the patio."

The priest looked at Bill in amazement, glanced at the patio because he could hardly believe his ears, and looked back at Bill in further wonder. Then a smirk showed over his face. "Aha!" he said to the judge. "You see this man is crazy; he is demented!"

"Sir," put in Bill, "do you deny this tree standing here in front of you and me?"

"I do not deny any such thing, because I do not see any tree there. There is no tree there for me to deny!" he shot back.

“Sir,” replied Bill, “I do not deny any doctrines such as you proclaim, because I do not see them. They are not there for me to deny.”

The judge, who had been following the conversation with interest, broke into a smile of enlightenment. “Well said!” he exclaimed, clapping his hand on the desk. He beckoned for a court officer to come over and whispered something in his ear. The officer then went to Bill and unfastened his handcuffs. Bill felt relief as his cramped hands were able to drop to his side. He looked at the judge.

“Now that I have set you free, what do you plan to do?” the judge queried.

“Sir, I will go tonight and have another meeting up on the hill in the same place.”

The judge looked around at the crowd, slowly studying the situation. “You go, and I will send ten soldiers to take care of you and protect you!”

Bill thanked the honorable man. That night the publicity from his imprisonment attracted many, and a powerful Spirit-filled service was held under the protection of the law. Today Neiva knows a thriving Pentecostal work.

CHAPTER Nineteen

Opening in Ecuador

A strange thing happened one day on a remote mountain. An old lady, who had hardly left her district, received the Holy Ghost and spoke repeatedly in perfect English, saying, “Malaga needs this gospel. . . . Malaga needs this gospel.” Believing that God was directing them, Bill and Ruth got out the map. The only Malaga they could find was a small coastal town, to which they went. They held meetings for a little while, but nothing happened nor seemed likely to happen. They left the place disappointed, because the old lady had spoken so clearly. Soon, though, the incident was forgotten, and there were plenty of other places to minister in.

Some eight or ten weeks had gone by since the moonlight flight of the mountain people, and Bill had hardly got over the trip to Neiva when a letter arrived from Santo Domingo de los Colorados in Ecuador. Some from La Morena had gone there and as usual began witnessing fervently. They had already convinced a number of people of their need to repent, be baptized, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Would Bill come and minister to them?

Bill felt he should go, but he had little money to go with. He would go in faith, he decided, and packed his pickup truck for the journey south.

Ecuador, “land of the equator,” was formerly Inca territory. The Inca leader Tupac Yupanqui had invaded Ecuador from the south in the 1470s, subduing local tribes to make the Kingdom of Quito the northern stronghold of his empire. His successor, in best European tradition, finished the job by marrying an Ecuadorian Indian princess. The progeny of this marriage was the famous but ill-fated god-emperor Atahulpa, who ruled along three thousand miles of the Andes. In a story of more piercing pathos than *Othello*, the aged, ex-swineherd Pizarro confronted the god-king in his prime, impounded him, and demanded a god-king’s ransom for his release. He got it. Atahulpa was garroted—a tale bloodier than *Macbeth*—and the empire tottered. Three hundred years of Spanish control followed,

broken by Bolivar in 1822. Bolivar's Grand Colombia also broke after only eight years, leaving Ecuador as the southern, and smallest, of the three parts.

In the first hundred years of independence, some forty juntas, presidents, or dictators had ruled and misruled the country. Even that period was peaceful compared with the years 1925-48, when twenty-two chiefs of state had to, one way or another, leave Quito. Things had since been quieter.

Bill set off alone for Santo Domingo de los Colorados, a town fifty miles west of Quito where the Colorado Indians, with their red-paste, basin-cut hairdos, survived in the surrounding rain forest. He planned to be away about two weeks.

The trip through the Andean scenery was uneventful until he crossed the border just south of the smuggling center of Ipiates. After the first Ecuadorian town, Tulcan, came the "chain," a road wriggling higher into the mountains and even narrower and more precipitous than usual. Traffic there was kept in one-way convoys by putting a chain across the road until the oncoming traffic was clear. However, the road was long and the system a bit hit-or-miss. At the top of the chain was the dreamy little town of El Angel; many had met other angels before reaching it. The chain was down when Bill arrived, but as he was the only small car in line he was called to the front. After an hour, a parade of traffic rolled by, and when the last straggler seemed to have gotten through, the chain was dropped. Bill bolted off into the formidable forest-covered lower slopes, the high Andes ahead peering contemptuously upon him. He had not gone very far when through the foliage he noticed a truck speeding towards him around the bend. The road was too narrow for passing, and all he could do was brake hard. The truck could not stop in time, however, and plowed into the front of his vehicle. The radiator began leaking, but apart from that, damage was limited to sundry dents in the bodywork. Apologetically the driver explained that he had been behind the former line but had not been able to keep pace. "It is just one of those things, señor," he shrugged, Spanish-style.

Without money for repairs, Bill had to make frequent stops to replenish the radiator, and it was late when he arrived in Quito, the

three-thousand-meter-high capital of Ecuador. Towering another two miles higher than Quito, the snow-covered volcano Cotopaxi glistened in the magnificent moonlight. After pondering the beauty of the city he found a cheap hotel, dropped a letter to Ruth asking her to send mail there, and retired.

In the morning he went to Santo Domingo, worrying a bit, for not only did he not have money to rent a building to preach in, he hardly had money to eat with. Bill decided he would fast the fortnight unless something turned up and on arriving in town booked into the cheapest endurable-looking hotel to be found. The brethren were not expecting him (he had not written because he would have beaten the letter there), and Bill was surprised when an exclamation came through the window, "Oh, hallelujah! Glory to God!" It was some of the Colombians, who had recognized his car. They greeted him enthusiastically, and when he heard they had already rented a place for church, which could seat about one hundred people, he was much relieved.

Despite opposition and disturbances, a number of Ecuadorians came to the service and stayed through to the end. No great events took place, so after the service Bill went back and dropped onto the board bed, exhausted. The board bed seemed to have the hard side turned up, and he was still awake when he heard the scuffle of many feet outside his door. Then came a sharp series of raps with the demand, "Open up!"

"Who is it?" queried Bill a little anxiously.

"It's the police. We want to talk to you!"

Quickly pulling his trousers over his pajamas, he opened the door. Instantly they arrested him for disturbing the peace and on the way to jail tried to accuse him of a lot of other things. They flung him into the communal cell, but the inmates appeared to know who was coming. They shrank away as if he had plague, leaving him alone in his corner. The bed was more comfortable than the one in the hotel, however, and after a time he fell asleep.

In the morning he was handcuffed and led to the court. As in Neiva, the priest was there to help proceedings. So was the rest of the

town. People who had been unable to squeeze into the court packed their heads into every opening. In court people elevated themselves by every device to get a better view of the happenings. Had the charge been high treason it could not have created a bigger stir. Bill remained philosophical (in a spiritual sort of way), feeling calm and controlled and knowing that God had promised him wisdom in such situations.

The judge accused Bill of disturbing the peace and asked him why he was there. "I notice you are only here on a tourist visa."

"Well, Señor Judge, being a tourist does not mean that you are not a Christian, and a Christian will automatically witness for Christ no matter where he is."

"I see in your passport that you have a few days left to stay in this country," the judge went on. "Do you know it is forbidden to preach?"

"No."

"In this country you must have a special permit, a license, before you can preach."

"Well, I must tell you, Judge, that I have," said Bill confidently.

"Oh? It's not in your passport."

"No, that is true. It would not be in my passport."

"If you have a special permit to preach, would you mind presenting it to me?" asked the judge.

"With great pleasure," he responded with gusto, reaching into his pocket and taking out the New Testament. Bill turned to Mark 16:15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

It was passed to the judge, who looked at it curiously.

"Señor Judge," Bill continued, "I would ask you a question. We are in Ecuador, is that not certain?"

“Yes,” replied the judge.

“May I ask you if you consider, as I do, that Ecuador is part of the world?”

“Oh, to be sure,” he said.

“Are there creatures here? The people that I see around me are actual people, is that not so?”

“Of course.”

“Well then, sir, that is my license to preach. Jesus gave it, and if it is not in my passport that does not change the license one bit. I have liberty and permission from the God of heaven to announce His kingdom wherever I go. Do you not think so? What do you believe the gospel is anyway, Señor Judge?”

Señor Judge was by now getting a little uncomfortable. “I didn’t bring you here to preach to me!” he blustered. After a short pause he added, “You are free to leave.”

Bill thanked the judge and went back to the hotel. From then on, the meetings were packed to capacity and the Spirit of God fell in a powerful way, while outside nuns and priests tried unsuccessfully to deter folks from entering. The same night that Bill was released, one young man received the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues—the first of what would be many.

Once more he was lying on his hard bed when another scuffle of feet, followed by a sharp rap, brought him to the door. He shone his flashlight on their faces and found a different group of people from the ones who confronted him before.

“Listen, we are your friends,” said a spokesman. “We have come to tell you that you don’t have to pay any attention to the judge, or the mayor, or the police, or the priests, because for every one that is against you there are ten for you, so go ahead and preach.”

Bill thanked them very much, and they invited him to a restaurant where they drank coffee and had a long talk about the things of God. In the group was the former mayor, the former head of police,

and some doctors. He told them of the baptism planned for early the next morning, and one man offered the use of his large truck to transport them.

At six A.M., thirty-two people crowded onto the truck to be baptized in the river in the name of Jesus. It was the first baptism by immersion they had ever witnessed, and the Spirit was poured out. A spiritual Ecuadorian army had been born.

On returning to the hotel Bill was met by the chief of police. "I have a telegram here from the authorities in Quito, ordering you to go and speak with them."

He agreed to go and meet them. Before he left, the judge then came to speak with him, as word had got to him about the planned baptisms. "You are not baptizing according to the Catholic church baptism. I have orders to forbid you baptizing."

"Thank you very much, sir," replied Bill, "but I believe you are about four hours late. I have just been to the river, and we baptized thirty-two out there in the name of the Lord this morning."

"Oh, my God!" the judge exclaimed, shaken. It looked as if he would be getting it in the neck from the priests for his failure.

Time was running out, for Bill needed to leave in the early afternoon to make the appointment in Quito. The authorities had booked him a seat on the bus, so keen were they to get rid of him. Instead of riding the bus, however, he nursed his car to Quito, filling it with water every couple of kilometers, and went to the hotel he had used previously. There was no mail for him.

Quito has four seasons: morning is spring, afternoon summer, evening autumn, and night winter. Without even a cent to buy coffee, he arranged to meet a man the following day to sell his spare truck wheels to raise money. He went to bed in his clothes to keep warm. When morning came, he went to the government ministry to search out the men he should speak to. Nobody knew about him, and he was met with blank looks. The telegram, it turned out, was a phony. There were no orders for him to come to Quito.

When he returned to the hotel, the old man at the desk greeted him. "There is a letter for you here, sir."

It was from Ruth. Everything was well—was he OK? She expected he would be back soon, and all were expecting him. Well, I'll do what I can to get back, thought Bill. Enclosed also was a letter from a former Sunday school pupil; it had come by boat mail. Ruth commented that she didn't think it was very important, and so he had not opened it.

In a hurry to meet the man about his wheels, he tucked the other letter into his pocket without reading it. The man was late for the rendezvous, so Bill sat in the sun and opened the letter from his old pal. He was surprised and delighted when out of it dropped a fifty-dollar bill—a huge sum in Ecuador those days—and now he felt like a millionaire. All thoughts of selling his wheels were forgotten, and he went to fill his rumbling stomach with a very large steak, praising the Lord. The old Sunday school pupil had promised Bill years ago, he wrote, that he would send him his first paycheck when he started work. This was the fulfilled promise—by slow mail but right on time.

In one small town on the way home he had to sleep in the truck because nobody would put up a Protestant. Nevertheless his spirits remained high, for God was acting in his life. He had been able to fix the car, he had money to eat with, and he now looked forward to seeing Ruth and his little boys again.

CHAPTER Twenty

El Terrible

It was towards the end of 1952 when Juan was made to wonder. He had thought nothing would shock him, but the atmosphere in the home had so changed since his last visit that he hardly recognized it. Not only had his mother put on a very persuasive piety, so had his younger brothers and sisters. Then there was this business about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, which they could do. It was just incredible, and Juan felt awkward. He had cause to.

Juan had left home years before. He was big, tough, and full of spirit. He had a sense of injustice. One of his downfalls, it often made him fight before he thought. His reputation grew quickly, as did his estrangement from the law. Now he was one of Colombia's biggest outlaws, being the right-hand man of El Terrible, the rebel leader of forty thousand bandits, murderers, and insurgents who were defying the government in the remote northern mountains. Back home in Palmira, however, Juan always kept a low profile, and few if any knew about his activities with El Terrible.

As for El Terrible, the name actually flattered him. One-eyed and one-eared, face crossed and recrossed with scars and lesions, he was a match for Ivan the Terrible. Murder and plunder maintained him; fear and chaos went in his wake.

And here Juan was, his little mother reading the Bible to him, trying to convert him, and him listening like a lamb. Once more his sense of injustice was excited, this time by the Holy Spirit, and almost before he realized what was happening to himself Juan became committed to Christ. The commitment was real, and though he had not yet been baptized in water, he received a tremendous burden for his comrades in the northern wilderness. He would go back to them without his guns and speak to them. But would Bill go with him?

Bill swallowed hard. It was risky in the extreme. Outsiders who tried to penetrate that section were lucky if they were only beaten

and robbed; many were murdered. Furthermore, it was impossible to get there by car—there were no roads. The only way in was by mule train. Yet Juan was most certainly risking death, so Bill could not ignore the request. In fact, the more he prayed about it, the more he felt—notwithstanding the difficulties—a compulsion to go.

When Bill inquired about joining a mule train, an official told him of a new airstrip in the region that had been built to take light aircraft. Bill received permission from the state to ride the scheduled airplane, should space become available, so he made his way to the northern town where it departed. He prayed hard, because the plane was on its inaugural flight and was scheduled only once a week anyway. God got him a seat on it, and for twenty minutes they skimmed over mountains and down valleys until, through driving seasonal rain, a tiny piece of tarmac appeared on a valley floor below. The pilot sideslipped into his approach in the manner of a barnstormer, and Bill could see Juan among a large crowd of onlookers. (Juan had gone on ahead by his usual route, witnessing on the way.)

The onlookers stared wide-eyed at Bill as he alighted. For many, it was their first sight of a man in western dress, as well as of an aircraft. So isolated from the twentieth century were they that one man admitted to Bill he had thought the plane to be a large kind of bird and was amazed when a man stepped out of it. The town, although it had some five thousand inhabitants, had neither roads, cars, nor electricity; many had never even seen a motorcar. There was no government representation of any kind. Most of the people were engaged in agriculture, sending their produce on the backs of animals to be sold, and on market days a string of seventy beasts or more would meander down the mountain trails. Indian blood was a very strong strain in them, and oval faces with dark eyes set over high cheekbones predominated. The men all wore ponchos; the women wore the long Spanish mountain dress that had been borrowed from another century.

Juan's place was five kilometers from the airstrip. He had not thought to bring a donkey, so they had to walk through knee-high mud and water the whole way. Dusk had fallen when at last they reached the house. Bill had not noticed any hostility so far—no

doubt because Juan was vouching for him—and the large group that had gathered to receive them at their destination was amiable. Juan's testimony had already caused a number to believe, and after an unhurried meal with them, Bill went onto the verandah with his pocket flashlight and Bible. They wanted him to preach.

Excusing his own poor Spanish, Bill began with the story of Philip going down to Samaria and preaching Christ to the Samaritans. Though he spoke for one and a half hours, no one moved or uttered a word. About midnight the question arose: Would he be willing to baptize those who believed and felt convicted? Happily. About six A.M. the next morning they went out to dam a small stream, while almost the entire town turned up to see the thirty-six who were to be baptized.

Afterwards they journeyed to the next village, called El Espejo, "the Mirror." News of their coming had gone before them. After Bill held another service, ten more wanted to be baptized. In the afternoon they held the baptism, once again in a stream, but it now caused a lot of anxiety and tension because they were getting towards El Terrible's territory proper, and the village was not named "the Mirror" for nothing. It was built on a knoll, completely surrounded by higher hills. Everything done in El Espejo could be seen from all around, and now some of El Terrible's men were being baptized, weeping and confessing to all manner of evil, robbery, and murders. Fear fell on the villagers, who did not know what retribution would be visited for such happenings.

El Terrible was, of course, aware of all that went on. He sent word down that night asking Bill to come up into his territory, as he would like to speak to him.

Was it genuine or just the cat playing with the mouse? Bill had no way of knowing, but he agreed anyway.

Mules were made ready, and at five A.M. they set off, in dramatic style, for the final frontier. The ground was steeper, higher, and harsher than any he had ever been on before. High wind and driving rain lashed them; they pulled their hats low and covered their faces, leaving only eye-slits. With bent head, they rode silently on: Juan at the front, Bill behind him, then four or five others.

There was no sound but the howling of the wind in the high sierras, no sign of human habitation, and hardly even a sign of wildlife punctured the desolation of the wilderness. Hour after hour they rode.

After six hours without a break, four riders surrounded them suddenly from behind a rock. There were too many coming. El Terrible would permit only Bill and Juan—the others must turn back. Bill glanced at Juan but could not read the look in his eye. Was it a trap? Were they going to be slowly tortured to death for venturing as they did—and taking El Terrible's men? The accompanying riders peeled off and rode back, vanishing quickly into the torrential rain. Bill felt he must go on. The riders went before and behind them, silently, plodding on intently. Now at times the trail became so narrow that they had to dismount and flatten against the rock, leading their animals. Still the rain poured onto them, and they had to take care not to slip off the muddy track into the precipice far below. Such territory could be defended by forty men, let alone forty thousand, thought Bill.

At about two o'clock, they came to a hamlet set against sheer cliffs just below the highest peak. The only way to the stone and wooden shacks was over a long tract of slowly rising ground covered with sparse tufts of grass. Behind the houses the cliffs looked as though they contained caves—a perfect retreat. The soft shrieking of the wind and the torment of the rain gave the place an even more sinister aspect. Without a word they were led over to the largest house, which was surrounded by a verandah. People were crowded into every space of both house and verandah; shoulder to shoulder they stood in their long ponchos, so that it was impossible to tell if they carried arms underneath. There was nothing in the way of an introduction of any kind; Bill was just led to the verandah with Juan and left in front of this sea of souls. Inside the house it was quite dark, and only the shapes of people could be seen. Was El Terrible there? thought Bill. If so, which one was he?

There was no point in standing there doing nothing, and feeling free in the Spirit, Bill decided to begin a church service with this unusual congregation. "I am not one of yours," he began, "but I belong to Jesus Christ, and I have come to tell you the good news of

the gospel.”

They listened on in silence. Juan slipped him a hymn book; inside was a scribbled note: “El Terrible is here.” But where? No faces could be distinguished. The Holy Spirit gave him inspiration and hung over the people in heavy conviction. Bill spoke on unruffled as he told of the power of God to deliver. The hours flew by. At the end of the message he gave the undaunted invitation: “Who wants to take Jesus Christ and be baptized?”

A perceptible change swept over the audience. Bill recognized it immediately—it was the sickening sense of fear. Now tremendous spiritual forces were striving together, and there was little Bill could do but follow the course of things. This was, however, the moment Juan had waited for . . . the moment he had planned for. Boldly he stepped forward. “I wish to be baptized,” he announced.

All eyes were now on him, for they knew El Terrible had threatened Juan with death should he submit to baptism. Juan knew too many secrets. The only way such a man could leave was to die. He was now in open rebellion. “I wish to be baptized,” he repeated, his voice quivering just a little.

“Very well, we are going to the stream for a baptism,” Bill told them. He led Juan out. No effort was made to restrain them, but the tension was at a breaking point. Many of the men were simply waiting for orders from El Terrible. Soon they were at the stream just below the cliffs. Again they made a small dam and waited while the level rose to form a pond. The men followed them out. Eight or nine of the biggest climbed onto a ledge about ten feet above the pond. They stood, all of them, watching the water level rise like one watches the sand run out of an hourglass. Everybody knew that when the water rose high enough, something was going to happen.

“Which one was El Terrible?” Bill whispered slyly to Juan, while they waited.

“You could have leaned over and touched him—he was the man just in front of you in the house!” Juan whispered back apprehensively.

The water was now high. Bill stepped into it first, asking Juan to wait on the side. He once more told them of their need to believe in Jesus and be baptized. Now he called Juan into the water. The men on the ledge stiffened and drew their guns simultaneously. There was an ominous click as they cocked them and pointed them with one accord at Juan. Juan caught the movement but, controlling a wave of fear, walked forward into the pool.

“Juan, you know my Spanish isn’t very good. You tell them why you want to be baptized.”

Juan, under the pointed pistols, gave a broken testimony in a tremulous voice. The two men were now looking at each other. Oblivious to the danger all about them, Bill put one hand on the head of his friend, the other behind his shoulders, and called over him the name of Jesus.

At that moment there was a tremendous screech, accompanied by the falling figure of a huge man. The man landed in front of Bill, splashing into the water. There was no doubt about who the one-eyed face before him belonged to: El Terrible. His one eye looked into both of Bill’s; his crossed pistols, still cocked, dangled by his side. But in that wail something had broken. It was as though the old spirit had been wrenched from the man.

In shaky voice he said, “I too want to be baptized. I have been a terrible man, but I want to be a new man, and I want what Juan has. I forbade him to be baptized, and now I see he is determined. I know it is real.”

And, Bill knew, this man too was real. Without hesitation, without waiting even for El Terrible to remove his pistols, Bill immersed the old rebel in the water. The unconscious symbolism of the guns also being soaked had a profound effect upon the onlookers. El Terrible rose out of the water calling with all his formidable gusto on the name of Jesus. It broke the ice, and a number of the rebels came forward for baptism.

That day seventeen were baptized, including El Terrible’s son and wife. Later they had a prayer meeting that lasted the whole night. El Terrible and the others were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke

in tongues. His life was truly changed from being that of a beast to that of human being.

The next day he came to Bill concerned, telling him that he felt he should give himself up to the law. Bill thought he should wait a while, but El Terrible was determined to do it immediately. Meanwhile, news spread throughout the mountains that El Terrible had become a son of God. He did what he could to make amends to those he had wronged before going down with Bill to see the state authorities.

On hearing the story and meeting El Terrible, the authorities graciously gave him a pardon. When he returned to his mountains, however, others were not so forgiving and wanted to take things over. Within three weeks of his conversion El Terrible was gunned down one night. Nobody knew who killed him, but he died in victory, with the smile of God on his face. When the news of all these events filtered out, such was the impact that *Time* magazine published an account of them. El Terrible is dead, but the work today goes on in those remote mountains.



The Drost family four years after the accident: Wynn, Bill, Gerald,

Ruth, Verner, Wayne.

CHAPTER Twenty-One

A Tunnel Out of Time

Soon after El Terrible's conversion it was furlough time for Bill and Ruth. They had to go back home to represent their field, tour the churches, and promote support for the work. It was an unwelcome intrusion, though in the organization of things it was a necessary one.

Sally Morley, an American lady missionary, along with Campo Bernal, a young Colombian destined to become one of the leaders of the movement, looked after the work in Cali while the Drosts were away. Things continued to move ahead because of the great enthusiasm and dedication of all. Though the people in America and Canada were very kind, Bill was delighted when the time came to return. It had been too protracted, with too many long drives and one-night stands, and too frustrating to be away from the South Americans he loved. And it was called furlough.

One thing he brought back with him was a new pickup truck. Bill looked forward to its being able to take him many miles in his work. He did not know it, but it possessed a grave defect in the steering mechanism. Instead of carrying him to his beloved Colombians, it was destined to carry him into a tunnel out of time.

They had not been back long when Bill decided to take the family to Medellin for two weeks, as the work there needed a boost. On the morning of the journey, long before the sun stabbed its shafts through the early mists, Bill was up praying. One of those vague feelings of uneasiness that had often preceded problems was with him when he awoke. Now it had receded, and he tried to forget about it.

He bundled their three boys in the back seat with Mariela, their house girl, and with Ruth beside him he set off along the winding mountain roads north. Apart from the children squabbling over who should sit in the middle, all went well, until they were close to the town of Pereira. As they approached a bridge over a watercourse,

and at the moment they would have mounted it, the steering suddenly collapsed and Bill lost control. The truck instantly lurched to the right, left the road, and dropped down the steep bank to the river twenty-five feet below. Ruth grabbed her husband's shoulders in panic as the car hit the water. It twisted upside down and came to rest on the riverbed, almost completely submerged.

Having been flipped as the car twisted, Ruth found her head just out of water inside the battered truck. The front of it was closer to the bank than the back was, so it was not as deeply buried, but the truck was sort of on its side as well as its back, and the steering position was totally submerged. All these things Ruth took in with a moment's appreciation, while she felt little Gerald crawling up her from below the water. A second later she felt Wayne scrambling up her from below too, and she grabbed the four-year-old with her free hand, lifting his head into the air.

"I have Gerald and Wayne," she shouted frantically, thinking Bill could hear her, "but where is Wynn?"

Bill, though, could not hear her—he had knocked his head in the accident and was unconscious. Anyway, he could not have moved himself had he been conscious; he was trapped behind the wheel, underwater.

Some men who had been extracting gravel from the river saw the accident and rushed over to help. They could not open the exposed door on the free side, but luckily the window was wide open.

Ruth pushed first Wayne and then Gerald through. As Gerald was going through, Wynn stuck his little hand in the air—it had all happened in less than a minute—and she pulled him out, noticing that blood was streaming from his head.

Quickly the men pulled Wynn from her and passed him away for attention. Next they dragged Ruth and Mariela through the window and laid them on the bank beside Gerald and Wayne. Desperately, Ruth then realized that Bill was still trapped beneath the murky waters where the men could not see him, and she cried to them that her husband was inside. Minutes now had already gone by. The men seemed unsure what to do.

“Turn the truck over! Turn the truck over!” she screamed.

They dashed behind the lower side of the truck, trying to flip it, but the pickup, almost filled with water, was too heavy; they could hardly move it. More minutes went by.

“It’s no use—we’ll have to get more help!” exclaimed one of the men as he dashed off. Ruth paced the bank in an agony of frustration, calling on God to help them. More minutes went by. Still the men had not returned. The other men tried to calm her and the children, while they hid Wynn because he was bleeding so badly. Eventually the man came back (he had run to the factory down the highway) with a large group. Among them was one who looked like an executive. He directed the rescue. Looking at his watch, he asked the men how long it had been since the accident.

“I’m afraid it’s been about eighteen minutes. When the car hit the water I looked at my watch, just in case . . .” The voice trailed off from one of the men attending to Wynn.

The executive’s face dropped. Soon, though, the car was over, and Ruth could see her husband slouched behind the wheel, with a terrible gash over his eye. After a short time, they pried the steering column from him and pulled him out, carrying him to the bank and laying him down. He did not move, and there was no sign of breathing. Ruth was almost beside herself with worry now.

The executive spoke to her tenderly. “Lady, we are sorry. We have done all we can. But it is twenty minutes that your husband has been under water. I am afraid it is too long . . . there is nothing we can do . . . he is dead.”

Ruth was dazed. She could hardly believe the words. Dead—Bill, dead? God had kept him miraculously through the war. He had kept him time and again from assassins’ hands in Colombia. Surely he could not be dead now, like this, by accident, with so much work left to be done?

But Bill indeed was dead. Yet the prophecies had been fulfilled. The revival had happened. The church that would grow to be the biggest Protestant force in Colombia had been born. And more than

fifteen minutes earlier, “Bill Drost the Pentecost”—the unarmed man the German army could not kill—had, in his fortieth year, entered the tunnel out of time.

CHAPTER Twenty-Two

Wrong Time in the Time Tunnel

When the car had plunged over the precipice, Bill had called on God. Then all went dark. What seemed like a few moments later he awoke, but he found himself confused. Obviously, something strange was happening, for he was looking down at a body that was identical to . . . his own. He could see it plainly, lying there under the water, with blood oozing from wounds in the head. Then he saw his children lying on the riverbank. He noticed that Ruth was very agitated, shouting to somebody. However, it was all like a silent movie, for though he could see everything, he could hear nothing. Thinking over what had happened he began to realize that he was in another world, yet still hovering above his own body.

“Am I alive or dead?” Bill asked himself. The words sounded as if they had been shouted down a long storm pipe, and then they reverberated back, shaking his very spirit. A purple mist began to envelop him, surrounding him by a force that was hard to explain, and through the mist an intensely bright light appeared to pulse and shine through everything. Then he began hurtling, at an almost infinite pace, down a great, glowing tunnel. Almost immediately a place of overwhelming beauty started to open before him, which was suffused with light and filled with music. “I must be in heaven,” he commented, with surprising equanimity.

Just before he entered the heavenly expanse, a power prevailed against his spirit, and a voice said: “YOUR WORK IS NOT YET FINISHED; YOU MUST RETURN.” After he had seen his destination, a tremendous surge of disappointment swept through him. He did not want to take up again the body that he had left bleeding under the water. Gentle hands, though, pressed his shoulders, and once more he was in the tunnel—plunging backwards into time.

Meanwhile, back on earth, hands somewhat less gentle dragged Bill’s body out of the river.

“Slap his face!” shouted Ruth as they laid his body down.

“Lady, it’s no use,” the executive tried to explain.

“Slap his face! Slap his face!” she screamed frantically.

The executive, with a resigned, hopeless shrug, slapped Bill’s face. Bill came to with a start. Pale, and with water pouring from him, he staggered to his feet. The executive turned almost as pale with surprise.

Ruth, in a state of shock, did not comprehend that a miracle had occurred, and her attention was diverted by a glimpse she caught of Wynn lying limp in the arms of Mariela. Blood poured from a huge gash on his head, and Ruth rushed over to him.

Bill, rejoined to his body, was in great pain. He felt as if his ribs had been slugged by Satan, and it was all he could do to totter uncertainly on the edge of events. His mind was still on where he had been.

A taxi was called and Ruth gathered her family into it. The driver rushed them to the hospital.

After a few days, they were able to leave the hospital and return home to regain strength. Through this experience Bill learned experimentally what he already knew by faith: death for the believer is nothing to be feared.

The special meetings in Medellin to which they had been traveling prior to the accident were now forgotten. But it did not really matter, since spontaneous spiritual combustion was sweeping the land as lay people evangelized everywhere.

CHAPTER Twenty-Three

The Serpents of Cholomando

No sooner had the family recuperated enough to travel when an urgent request came from Brother Israel, a young convert from La Morena who was pastoring a small work in the primitive mountain town of Cholomando. This was a trip that Bill and Ruth did not want to make, for it meant traveling down that same Medellin road, past the scene of the accident. The nagging question of why God had allowed it to happen was bothering them both.

But duty called, and with some trepidation they climbed into their new pickup (replaced by the factory) and set off again along the torturous route. Hairpin bend after hairpin bend took them past precipice after precipice. At least the view was beautiful, as vast vistas of the almost almighty Andes towered over lovely valleys, tempered by their timeless terraces. In the cool mountain air the Andes appeared as clear as Patagonian ice. Once in a while a silver stream would cascade down the mountain wall and dance over the dirt road before them, making deep and dangerous mud. As they approached the scene of the accident, silence fell. Once past, Bill and Ruth breathed a sigh of relief.

“Dad, are there really big snakes where we are going?” Wynn asked reflectively after a time.

“Yes, lots of them,” Bill replied, not realizing how accurate his words were to be.

Blowing the horn with excitement, they eventually entered Cholomando. It had been a long time since Bill had seen Israel. A group of believers were with Israel, and they were waiting to meet the Drosts. Introductions were being made when a scream from the boys startled everybody.

“Daddy! A snake—quick!” Wynn cried.

Bill ran to Wynn—and then stopped beside him. A mammoth boa constrictor, bigger than any Bill had seen, had rustled its way out of

the forest and was meandering across the road. The others had now gathered, forming an excited circle around the creature. The snake, feeling threatened, reared up and began swaying this way and that, but the people grabbed sticks and, after their usual manner, pretenderized it for the pot by battering it to death. Snake meat was for them more succulent than chicken.

After the commotion the Drosts were ushered into a humble little room for a meal. Bill finished quickly and then went to pray for guidance. This was the first time these people had ever received visitors, and they expected him to bring the touch of God. Shortly, the congregation began slipping into the soft glimmer of the candle-lit room. Horses' hoofbeats and the dull red glow of cigarettes studding the night, announced a growing gathering of unconverted eavesdroppers without, too afraid to come in. The Christians sang heartily, and Bill preached powerfully.

At the close of the meeting, a man pushed forward through the outside crowd. "Mister, come here. I want to talk to you!" he demanded gruffly.

Bill looked at the man and his heart sank. This character challenging him was no nursemaid. Why do bandits always choose me to bark orders at? he thought. It was dangerous to refuse—but it appeared equally dangerous not to. Once more he looked to the Lord and then stepped outside. Bill could now see the man more clearly. His face had a wild, haunted look about it, making Bill feel even more uneasy.

"Get in the car! Run me down the road!" the stranger commanded in quick succession.

They pulled off into the night, and the man fell silent until a bridge loomed ahead. "Stop there!" he ordered, pointing to the bridge with an air of extreme agitation.

From the corner of his eyes Bill stole a glance at his companion. What was the matter with him? Was he mad? Was he planning to throw him into the raging river?

The man continued, "Get out! I want to talk to you." Bill worried

over what lay ahead.

The cold night air, further cooled by the torrent tumbling down the mountain and rushing under the bridge, conspired with the situation to send a chill down Bill's spine that brought him near to panic. His car headlights, deliberately left on, pierced the blackness, and Bill could see sweat trickling down a face tormented almost to distraction. The stranger put his left hand on Bill's right shoulder, leaning them both over the low stone wall of the bridge, and then pointed with his free hand into the oblivion below. Now the stranger's eyes opened even wider. His head shook in short, stabbing motions, like one forced to face the unbearable, and he began trembling.

"Mister, do you hear that water? Do you hear those people screaming for help?" the man queried.

Bill didn't—but felt like screaming for help himself.

"It haunts me. Night and day, it haunts me," continued the stranger dementedly. "Listen! It haunts me! It haunts me!"

Bill straightened, relieving the pressure on his stomach, which had been pressed against the wall. Concluding that the man had no evil intention towards him, he surveyed him more calmly. Indeed, this creature was haunted—more so than any Macbeth—and the incessant roaring of the waters was to him a wailing of revengeful cries from the pit.

The man looked into Bill's eyes with a desperate, wild searching. "Is there hope for a man like me? What you said tonight—is it true? Is there hope for a man like me? . . ." he trailed off. Then he went on, "I have held many persons screaming over these waters, to torture them. Then I've planted them into the icy river below. . . . Can't you hear them screaming now?" Turning to Bill, face glistening with a macabre mixture of spray and sweat, he asked yet again, "Is there any hope for a man like me?" With lost eyes he gave a last, hopeless look at the preacher and without waiting for a reply vanished into the night.

Bill never saw him again. With furiously beating heart, he turned

the car towards Cholomando, trying to pull himself together. The tormented text of the man's misery—"Mister, is there any hope for a man like me?"—haunted him. It was like a nightmare. Bill wondered: Can a man so distracted by sin ever forgive himself—or will he be like Judas and kill himself? Perhaps that is one of the horrors of hell itself, the desolate decree locked into every one of those eternal chains: "Is there any hope for a man like me?"

Fear had filled all those left behind, for as soon as Bill had gone the people had told Ruth, in their straightforward but undiplomatic way, that this man was one of the worst killers around. When the car returned she sobbed with relief. The children, now that he was back, were just excited and wanted to hear the story together with everybody else. Quite a number turned to God that night. Bill was to turn in his sleep.

If there was one thing he needed, it was a good night's rest. The five of them slept together on the floor of a tiny room, with Bill nearest to an ill-fitting door, and as usual his legs were too long for the blanket. Some time after falling asleep he was aroused by something that seemed to be tickling his feet. Something that, he began to realize, was of a cold and clammy consistency . . . slithering around and tantalizing his toes. Snakes! He came to in a horror of awareness with his heart racing yet again. Forcing his body not to tremble, he tried to assess his predicament. They felt—for there appeared to be more than one—like the small poisonous species of about twelve to eighteen inches long. What should he do—wake the family? But that would scare everybody, snakes included, and maybe make them bite. At the moment, they were just trying to get body heat to give themselves a comfortable night. After some reflection he reluctantly decided to do nothing. Nothing, that is, but pray. All night long. Many times he felt them stirring, and though normally he was very ticklish, that night he did not feel at all like laughing. Early in the morning the snakes, having spent a cozy night, slipped away.

The family stayed only one night in that room.

And, as if all that wasn't enough, the trip back down from Cholomando was on the precipitous side of the road.



The new truck beside the church and house in Cholomando.

CHAPTER Twenty-Four

Where Wise Men Say Farewell

Back in 1953 when General Rojas Pinella seized power, he initially had been popular—mostly because he had promised economic improvement and an end to La Violencia. As often happens with politicians' promises, they had not been kept. In Colombia, violence and bloodshed were still the arbitrators, and cruelty was still the creed. It was a difficult time for the believers, and though sometimes Bill would baptize up to one hundred people per month, there had been many martyrdoms. The army was especially disenchanted, and in 1957 when coffee prices dropped to a disastrously low level, Pinella's waning star finally fell.

Seven army trucks loaded with explosives rumbled up to park beside the football stadium, just a stone's throw from Bill's house, one sunny September evening. But before the drivers left they were given new orders to proceed to the barracks in the town center, so they drove away. This incident went almost unnoticed. Ruth, expecting her fourth baby at any time, retired with Bill at a late hour. Not long after they went to bed, a huge explosion rocked Cali, bursting open their windows. Bill rushed to look out. The city center was a fireball, and in the distance screams for help could be heard. He dressed hurriedly and raced into town. Ruth switched on the radio and listened with anxiety for any news.

Entering the downtown area reminded Bill of the war. Devastation covered a massive area, with mangled, maimed, dying, and dead bodies everywhere. Others of the less badly injured wandered around in shock, unable to comprehend what had occurred. But what struck Bill most was the sight of men still sitting in their bar chairs—some in the very act of drinking—who had been killed instantly by the blast. Screaming sirens announced the arrival of rescue workers, and the area was soon cordoned off.

Back home Ruth heard the radio making urgent appeals for doctors and nurses to come and assist the injured. Those seven ammunition trucks (whether by accident or sabotage was unclear) had been set

alight. For days, the living and the dead were pulled from the debris, and when the final toll was counted more than five thousand lives had been lost. Except for that last-minute change of orders, the Drosts would have been within the death zone.

Two weeks later their fourth son, Verner, was born, and he was healthy and bouncing.

“Ruth, I feel I should visit the Bakers in Brazil,” Bill startled his wife one morning. “I feel I should go this week,” he added, waiting for her reaction.

“Well, if you think it is the Lord, it is OK by me,” she replied, getting over the shock. Verner was only a few weeks old.

“I’ll stay with them a week or two. They don’t get too many visitors down that way, and it has been years since we’ve seen them. It will encourage them a bit to see somebody from the outside. It’s a pity the twins aren’t a bit older . . . I could have taken them with me.”

“Don’t you tell them that—I’ll never be able to keep them here!” Ruth counseled. “It’s hard enough now.”

The Bakers were old friends of the Drosts and tireless missionaries. Bill had never been to Brazil before, so when he boarded the Dakota a couple of days later it was with double pleasure. His flight took him southeastward, right across the fabulous forests of the Amazon Basin, then over the Mato Grosso to the more heavily populated seaboard region and the great city of Sao Paulo. As the language was Portuguese, Bill had even more problems preaching than in Colombia, so at the meetings he spoke through interpretation. After ten days he took his leave of the Bakers but could not leave behind the conviction that he would one day return for a much longer period.

Colombia sticks a tongue out of its southeast corner to lick the Amazon river at the border town of Leticia. Sitting between Manaus in Brazil and Iquitos in Peru, nailing the three nations together in the middle of nowhere, it is a remote yet important crossing point. On the Colombian side, the closest road is three hundred miles away through thick jungle; no river flows north, so one must travel

by air. Bill arrived there in high spirits, expecting to see his family soon. His spirits plunged when he found the border barred.

“There’s a revolution going on in Colombia—no travel is allowed to anybody,” he was flatly informed by the officials. With great anxiety he went to try to telephone his wife.

“There’s been a revolution. No telephone calls can be made to Colombia until further notice. No telegrams, no letters, no nothing until they get things sorted out over there,” the man at the post office told him. Bill became desperate. After walking around for a while, wondering what he should do, he went back to his room.

“O God,” he cried, “spare my wife and my little boys. Take care of all the believers.” Unable to sleep that first night, he paced the floor praying. In the morning it was still the same situation: nobody could do anything, and nobody could tell him anything. He could not resist the temptation to kick himself for leaving Cali so heedlessly at such a volatile time. Still . . . Colombia was always volatile . . . who could ever predict the future there? he partly excused himself.

The future had been on his mind a lot recently. Ruth had not discerned it, but recently Bill had felt the cloud beginning to move. In part, was that not why he had traveled to Brazil? A divine restlessness had been disturbing him, but now a darker cloud had descended: would he have any family left to continue with him in the work? Why had he not insisted that they come with him? Had God taken him out of the country to spare his life? Troubled with such gloomy thoughts, he returned once again to the hotel. As it was useless pleading with man, he fell into a daily routine of pleading with God, listening to the radio for news, and going into the streets to hear the latest rumors. One day slipped into one week, and still the border was barred.

As quickly as people heard of the revolt in the capital, the twin terrors of anarchy and confusion bounded out of Bogota to embrace the whole of Colombia. Ruth was holed up in her house with the children and some of the saints, because an around-the-clock curfew had been declared. Various factions seeking power, as well as terrorists, were fighting on the streets. Bullets flew everywhere, and

no soldiers or police appeared to impose any order. No doubt they had their own problems, deciding who they should support or fighting their own battles. It was like the first days after Brother Johnson's death all over again, with Bill away and terror on the terrace; but this time Ruth had four children to fear for, as well as many believers. Once in a while she would crawl to a window and peep quickly onto the street, wondering, among other things, when they would be able to get out and replenish their dwindling food supplies.

By the sixth day things seemed to be getting quieter. Ruth was therefore surprised and very frightened when about midnight she looked out to see many of the neighbors, dressed only in nightclothes and with children in arms, hurriedly leaving their homes. They appeared to be heading towards the Catholic church a little further down the road. What should she do? Finally opening the window, she called out anxiously.

"We're going to the church to spend the night because there is much danger, and they have promised that this whole section of the city is going to be blown up tonight. Get your children in blankets and come with us," a man said.

With that, a neighbor who had been listening stuck his head around and said, "Lady, I am not going to go. There appears to be very great danger, but I have made up my mind that I am going to remain here with my family. If you like, you can bring your children over and stay with us. Otherwise, if you want to stay there, feel free to call us for any help you may need."

Those words struck home, and forcing herself to be calm, Ruth decided to trust the Lord to protect them. "Thanks, but no, we will stay here," she responded slowly yet resolutely. "If we need any help we'll call you," she added to the neighbor.

"It would be wiser if you went with us," returned the man below. "They will not destroy the church. We must be on our way. Adios!"

Not an hour had gone by when in the distance could be heard the rumbling of a large truck. Ruth went cautiously to the window, and as it came closer she could see that it was full of soldiers. They

drove around and around the neighborhood for a long time. Was order being restored at last? After some time the soldiers went to the church. “Don’t worry; we are going to take care of you,” they assured the people. “Go home to your beds and get some sleep.”

Take care of them they did, but Ruth believed a higher hand had put this on their hearts. The dawn broke on a new, more peaceful, political day. Before long the border opened and Bill was able to get back, much relieved and thankful to find everybody safe. It was another lesson in faith.

Early in 1958 a concordat was signed in Spain, and Colombia entered a period of relative stability. The church, meanwhile, continued to expand rapidly; so too did the cloud that had been no bigger than a man’s hand when Bill had visited Brazil. National leadership was by now well developed, and Bill knew it would continue to thrive, for already the nationals were solving their own problems in a mature manner. Pastors were reproducing themselves successfully, working together without jealousy, and motivating their people to maintain a high Christian standard. A good foundation had been laid, but he could find no burden to build the superstructure. The time to move was approaching.

Later in the year, Bill offered to go to Uruguay while the missionaries there took a long-overdue furlough. It was heartbreaking to leave behind the Colombians with whom they had faced so many dangers. The crowd that came to the airport, so large in heart but small in resources, further broke their hearts by offering them their meager best: a few eggs, a chicken, and some bananas. One old lady spent a large amount of her money to give them what in Colombia was a rare fruit—an apple. Full with emotions that they were unable to articulate adequately other than in the universal language of tears, the Drosts walked across the tarmac, conscious that they were leaving behind a very large part of themselves.

In fact, Bill and Ruth had left something else behind, and that something was their missionary method. They were pioneers of missionary church-planting techniques that are today considered normal. Bill’s primary means of expanding the work, other than his complete identification and friendship with the people, was to

encourage immediate evangelization by new believers and allow the development of ministry by a process of spiritual “natural selection,” thus eliminating the necessity of formal theological training.

Donald Palmer would later report in depth on the “Drost method” in his book *Explosion of People Evangelism*, published by Moody Press. The same strategy, with similar successful results, would be reported by a young couple called to Cambodia, in their book *Anointed for Burial* two decades later. Actually, it was hardly a method at all, but only a rediscovery of the apostles’ practice, who, taught in the peripatetic school of the Master, had simply emulated Him. They too had dispensed field commissions to lay disciples . . . and in doing so had effectively evangelized their world.

While the local people followed naturally what they had been taught, other missionaries left behind picked up the principle, so that within three decades of the Drosts’ arrival, a whole infrastructure of national ministers and churches permeated the country. In Colombia there was nowhere the church would not be.

CHAPTER Twenty-Five

Another Battle on the Plate River

“How long is it going to take for the visas to come through?” Ruth queried her husband. They were in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and there was the crispness of a temperate zone spring in the air. After ten years in the tropics, it felt unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable.

“Oh, three or four days they told me,” Bill replied nonchalantly, pondering the Plate River pouring its precious silt into the salt of the South Atlantic Ocean. One hundred miles or so eastward over the vast estuary lay their destination, Montevideo.

Bill was thinking again of the war years. On this river, named “Silver” by the treasure-conscious conquistadors, the battleship *Graf Spree* finally ran for refuge after being chased back and forth between three continents. Like terriers holding a bull at bay, diminutive British destroyers, named, appropriately, after Greek heroes, sat in the nearby international waters keeping impatient station, determined to destroy that savage marauder of the merchant marine. Already wounded, *Graf Spree* had scuttled herself rather than fight or risk capture. No doubt her captain had saved many lives in doing so, but he had not chosen to save his own. Bill pondered, Why do men continually sacrifice themselves to so many misguided causes? A pain in his lower abdomen—he had been getting a lot of them recently—made him leave off his reflections. He turned to Ruth. “Come on, let’s go back to the hotel and rest. I’m feeling tired.”

Three days later they were able to make the crossing to Montevideo; as usual Bill spent the voyage bringing up breakfast, closely followed by tea and dinner from the previous day. Then he shifted up into what yachtmen call second-degree seasickness . . . when you are so sick you’re afraid you’re not going to die.

On arriving they found the country to be a great contrast to Colombia. Here the people were almost all European, better

educated, and relatively prosperous, for the rolling, fertile lowlands that formed Uruguay had to feed only three million souls. The Uruguayan people were, with some justification, proud of their nation's achievements, though at that time they were going through a period of economic unrest. With the Uruguayans being liberal in temper and somewhat conservative in outlook, Bill found he could safely shake their hands. In Colombia, he often had to count his fingers afterwards.

In addition to getting adjusted to the local Spanish, it took them some time to get adjusted to the missionaries' house, and in doing so they almost lost their lives. At the top of the stairs was a small room that contained the bottled gas supply; it was also full of old books and magazines, as preachers' homes often are. Ruth was searching in this room for something one evening, by the light of a candle, and somehow one of the papers must have started smoldering without her noticing. Hours later they woke up to find the house filled with smoke and the storeroom ablaze. Their way downstairs was blocked, so notwithstanding the danger of explosion they had to fight the fire. Once more God spared them, and they were able to bring it under control without mishap.

On another occasion they woke up one morning almost choked by gas. One of the twins had almost lost consciousness, while Bill was left sick the whole day from it. Had Ruth slept any longer they would have all woken up in eternity.

Though he did his best, and the church was making progress as converts were taken to be baptized in the Plate River, Bill's health was slipping. He had noticed it first in Cali—a general listlessness and slowing down. Due presumably to his resistance being low, his upcountry exposure left him with constant attacks of dysentery, and for a whole six weeks he suffered such a severe onslaught of the amoebic type that he was left completely worn out. Despite getting plenty of rest and continually crying out to God, he did not get better. Sometimes his body felt filled with liquid flame, but he struggled to keep his condition from Ruth.

Sitting up in bed, trying to get relief from the pain that seemed to press his heart, Bill asked himself, "How can I tell the good folk at home that I am about done?" He looked at his wife, and she

appeared to be sleeping. Was she? Had she noticed how many times when unable to sleep he had gotten up to pace restlessly around the streets? Other missionaries had been recalled from the field due to disease . . . was this now going to happen to him? The doctor in Colombia had told him a year back that he needed to rest, but he was resting yet getting worse. Furthermore, he was losing weight and having fainting spells. Reluctantly, he decided to consult another doctor.

“You need to go back to Canada for a change and a complete rest as soon as possible—and when you get there you need to see your physician immediately,” he was told after being examined. “You are a sick man.”

“We’ll be going home in a few weeks anyway. The missionary whom we are replacing is due to return,” Bill replied. “I guess I’ll be better once I’m home,” he added optimistically. The doctor made no comment.

This time leaving was not so difficult, for they had only been in Uruguay around a year and had not formed those close bonds with people that come from shared suffering. As Bill looked out from the aircraft into the bright sky, a dark premonition of a great battle ahead came to him from the Lord. The rest of the flight was spent in concerned contemplation.

When they arrived in Miami to change flights, Bill felt beat. “We’ll just rest around the airport until tonight,” he told Ruth, sitting down wearily.

At that a voice hailed him. “Brother Drost, Brother Drost!” It was Brother Dunn, an old friend who pastored one of the local churches. “Praise the Lord; it’s good to see you folks!” he said with great warmth. “I heard you were coming through, so I thought I’d come to the airport and meet you. There’s time for you to come and have a service with us. It’s all arranged!” He began picking up some of their baggage.

Bill put on a brave face and they tagged along, genuinely joyful to see this good man of God. Ruth, ashamed about how ragged they all looked, gave the boys a little on-the-run grooming, which they self-

consciously tried to resist. At the pastor's house they were showered with kindness.

Sitting on the platform waiting to preach, Bill cried out silently to the Lord, "O God, heal my body and deliver me of this condition that I may go forth strong."

Unexpectedly, he got a clear reply. "THIS FURLOUGH IS GOING TO BE A GREAT TIME FOR YOU, AND YOU SHALL GLORIFY ME SUCH AS NEVER BEFORE."

Bill felt mighty encouragement from those words. In the following weeks he would need it.

CHAPTER Twenty-Six

It Has Got You!

Leaving the meeting, the Drosts were taken to the airport and flew on to London, Ontario, where many people were waiting to greet them. After taking a few days of rest at the farm, they went into a heavy schedule of meetings—Brockville, Hamilton, Toronto—and church after church rejoiced as they heard their stories. They were seldom able to sleep before one A.M., and the pace was pulling Bill apart. He was thirty-five pounds lower than his usual weight, and his weight was still falling. Suits hung on him like limp flags, while his sunken cheeks and sallow complexion shouted that something was very badly wrong, yet he battled on without a medical examination. In his heart of hearts, he did not want to acknowledge how sick he knew himself to be.

They were at Brother Moulton's house eating after the service one night, when Bill began shaking so violently that Brother Moulton was able to persuade him to see their family doctor.

"You're in no condition to be traveling around, Reverend Drost," the physician told him after giving him a thorough examination.

"Can you give me something to put me on my feet, doctor?" Bill asked, already half-knowing the answer.

The doctor responded gently, "I do not have a remedy for you. I believe you will have to go into hospital for a very serious operation, but first I would like you to see this specialist." The cloud was getting darker. It was just as Bill feared.

Soon after leaving the house the doctor phoned Brother Moulton to tell him privately that he believed Bill Drost had cancer. With tears in his eyes, Brother Moulton made many phone calls that night to get people praying. The following day Bill went to Montreal to see the specialist, and he was surprised to find that the doctor was an old childhood friend. Dr. Arnold Jones was equally surprised to find that Bill was a missionary.

Completing his examination, Dr. Jones addressed him seriously, "I know you are a man of God, and as far as possible I want to be fair with you," he began. "I feel that you have cancer . . . in a very advanced state. You need to go into the hospital for immediate tests and surgery. We should have you in there in the morning," he added forebodingly.

Bill had expected some bad news, but this was so devastating that for a moment he was left speechless. "Oh, Dr. Jones, do you mean that I have cancer!" he exclaimed, unable to believe it.

Looking at him deliberately, the specialist replied, "It's worse than that. The truth is . . . the cancer . . . has got you!" He went on to tell Bill that they would need to put a tube in his side and kindly offered to be the attending physician. But he could not offer hope—not even with a long operation.

"Dr. Jones, I'm going to go home to New Brunswick to see my people before I do anything at all," Bill said at the conclusion.

"I strongly advise against going anywhere except to the hospital. You are desperately sick."

"Doctor, I've made up my mind. I'm going to New Brunswick."

Dr. Jones shook his head resignedly. "If you make it, I want you to go and see Dr. Everett Chalmers in Fredericton. Here's his address."

On leaving the office Bill was in such a state of shock that he could hardly speak to his companion, and he went to be alone. The promises of God seemed far away. Had he really heard from God—or was it his imagination? No, he believed he had heard. But what exactly did those words mean? Was this the last, lingering goodbye, to face with fortitude? If it was, what was the point of being cut up in the hospital? With many questions and few answers, he made his way back to New Brunswick.

July 1 was a big fellowship day at Harvey Camp, and Bill was listed as speaker. He wanted rather to hide away, but the compassion he was met with made him hope the believers there could touch God for a miracle with their prayers. Some did not seem so hopeful, and

more than once he overheard people observing that “poor old Bill is not long for this world.” Brother Dudley, at whose home he was staying, looked after him with great consideration. Through the years Bill had learned to respect this man’s prayer power, and when he left to consult Dr. Chalmers one morning he was hoping, though he felt no better, to have a different report.

In the doctor’s office he felt weak and was trembling. Across from him sat a backslidden Pentecostal worker he had known years before, and the thought crossed his mind, Well, you can thank God you are dying in victory. Bill shook his head and tried to dismiss it as the devil, but from then on the thought would not leave him.

Dr. Chalmers questioned him at length, then made his examination. “Why did you take so long to see a doctor when you have been passing blood for so long?” he asked, adding, “You should have been operated on long before. The cancer is so advanced that you will need a tube in your side for the rest of your life.” But his final remark was like an obituary to Bill: “Even if the operation is successful, you could never return to the mission field.”

That was the final straw. Apart from a miracle he was finished as a missionary—perhaps finished altogether anyway. Finally, Bill said, “Doctor, I’m going to Plaster Rock for a convention.”

“You’re in no condition to travel. We need to operate as soon as possible.”

“No, I’m going to this convention. You can make the hospital arrangements for the following week,” Bill concluded. The bad dream was going on.

CHAPTER Twenty-Seven

Goodbye to All That

Plaster Rock was a repetition of Harvey Camp, only Bill felt even worse. Not only had he reached the end of his strength, he had come to the end of his courage. Throwing himself down on the camp bed in the little cabin, Bill cried to God, “Let me stay here!” On the night of July 7 he took a bad bleeding spell and collapsed, feeling that he was going into eternity. Ruth, sensing that something was wrong, hurried into the bedroom, full of anxiety.

“Honey, let me go out and get the brethren to come in now and pray,” Ruth said, trying not to sound panicky.

“Listen, hundreds have prayed for me, and I have been anointed many times. I don’t want prayer. But I want to tell you this: do not take the children back to South America . . . they are too young to be there.” Exhausted, he added, “Let me die in peace.”

Not knowing what else to do, Ruth slipped outside, praying desperately to herself, and sought guidance. Bill cried again to his Creator, “God, I am so discouraged. What holds things up? Why, oh why, cannot You heal me? Is there hidden sin in my life? O God, show me if I am blind.” Then he read James 5:14 several times: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

Struggling to his feet, he walked to the door and went outside the cabin. The fresh night air momentarily reminded him of what seemed so long ago in Colombia, when he had leaned over the bridge with the bandit. Now, once again he was leaning over a bridge, this one crossing the river of death, and he did not have the strength to pull back from it.

At that moment, Glenn Ireland, a great Christian worker, came to him. “Brother Drost, I have been burdened for you and have been walking back and forth calling on God. I believe we should get the brethren and pray for you,” he said earnestly.

“Brother Ireland, I cannot say God is going to heal me. . . .” Bill began, as indeed he could not, for, though he fought for it a long time, he knew that the faith which finds the substance of things hoped for was not with him. “But if you call the brethren I will be glad,” he finished, completely resigned to whatever would come. Wearily, he went back to bed.

In a few minutes his children and wife gathered around the bedside, together with a group of leading ministers. “O God, don’t let Daddy die; don’t let Daddy leave us!” the boys pleaded, while the ministers made their own great, groaning intercessions. Despite there seeming to be something real about the fervency of their prayers, Bill felt nothing; no power was going through his body to dissolve the cancer and purge the pain. As they began drifting away he drifted, totally drained, into slumber.

On waking in the morning, Bill realized that he had slept without fighting for breath and without being constantly called to consciousness by pain. At first he thought he must be dreaming; then, on reflection, he became amazed. For the first time in ages he was hungry! The conviction—no, realization—that God had healed him was growing on him moment by moment. He felt light and excited. Telling his wife he wanted something to eat, he made his way over to the dining room.

A black brother who was on cooking duty met him. “Brother Bill, what are you doing here!” he exclaimed.

“I came for breakfast. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ has healed me! I feel so hungry!” Bill returned.

The cook came over and scrutinized him closely. “Glory, hallelujah! Brother Bill, I believe he has! But . . . breakfast isn’t ready yet! Wait and I’ll get you something! Oh, glory, hallelujah!”

After a hearty breakfast, Bill went for a bowel movement, which he accomplished without pain. For months he had hardly been able to go to the toilet without fainting. Never had his body, soul, and spirit been filled with such a joy and gladness and holy awe at the same time. Completely revived, he testified to whoever he met that the Lord had healed him. Some rejoiced, but many seemed

skeptical, for he was still skin and bones. With not a few doubts, one man grabbed a camera for a “before and after” picture. Notwithstanding his testimony, others continued with their “Poor Bill, he’s not long for this world” observations. It was like the Bible story where the believers prayed without ceasing for Peter’s release from prison, but could not believe that their prayers had been answered. The family believed, though, and were elated.

Curiously, he had felt nothing when the people had asked God to heal him—no cancer being torn from his body, nothing spectacular in any way, not even a tinge of electricity. But there he was, better than he had been for years. The Lord seemed to have silently dissolved the disease while he slept. While he thought on these lines, Satan slipped into his mind, “You had better go easy. This is only for today!”

Only for today! Why, today was Missionary Day, and already the Amazon and Brazil were beckoning him. Beginning to get nervous he cried, “O God, help me! Who will go there to the Amazon? Who? Who? O God, spare me!”

Then the Lord gave him the thought: “God gives strength for the day; tomorrow will take care of itself. There will be no problem.”

Reassured, he rejoiced again and went to the missionary meeting as one very much involved in the affairs of this life. The following day he felt free and stronger than ever. When he said goodbye to the Plaster Rock retreat, he knew he was saying goodbye to years of suffering. It was great to be alive.

“This is the day you have the hospital appointment,” Ruth reminded him. Instead of the remark being a knell of doom, it was a nudge to revive rejoicing.

“I know, but I feel guilty going there, I feel so good. As a matter of fact, I feel as full of beans as a sixteen- year-old!”

“Beans or not, you better go there.” Ruth laughed, and together they went to the imposing building. Since it was the day the operation was scheduled, the doctors were expecting him. One doctor came immediately to examine him.

“Doctor, I feel bad being here,” Bill began. “I don’t feel any pain at all; in fact, I feel extra healthy!”

The doctor gave him one of those queer, old-fashioned looks and chose to ignore the remark. Beginning his examination, though, he grew more curious and less self-assured by the minute. Other specialists were then prevailed upon to examine him, and despite protests as to his health, they insisted that he would have to stay.

Stay he did! For nine days they pulled him and pinched him; they took blood from here and blood from there; they tested this and that; they x-rayed with and without barium. And, like the grand old Duke of York, as soon as they had finished they began again. As well as searching his stomach and intestines they looked at his liver, his heart, everything else they could get to, and things they couldn’t get to but would have liked to. It was getting boring. Bill felt that had he two heads, the doctors were so busy looking inside they would not have noticed. The whole medical staff, right down to the dentist, was amazed and mystified. At last they admitted, “Reverend Drost, we do not know where this cancer has gone.”

“I also don’t know where,” Bill told them, “but I know how, for there are thousands who have been praying to the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” There was nothing to do but give him a clean bill of health and let him go. Where he would go, Bill had no doubts at all.

CHAPTER Twenty-Eight

All That Heaven Allows

The summer of 1960 had come and gone and Brazil was beckoning. This time, though, it would not be the vast, trackless wastes of Amazonia but the hustling, bustling, bursting city of Sao Paulo, which swallowed in workers from the rural areas of the whole country in its unquenchable hunger for industrialization. All the evils of people and sin pollution had already begun to pile high when Bill and the family arrived, and nothing would stop the momentum of materialism. Sao Paulo's head was spinning with the intoxication of being drummed into modern times to the pounding of the press and the thunder of the hammer. Its inhabitants hurried to the tune of this new Mardi Gras of machinery. After being fed into factories all week, on weekends they were sucked into soccer stadiums to witness the prowess of a Pele, and perhaps forget for a while all that they had lost in return for what little they had found. Satiated but unsatisfied by it all, some were beginning to turn their ears towards the sound of another drummer. For those who would walk with this One, there would be no later disillusionment.

The Bakers, whom the Drosts were relieving for furlough, met them at the airport and stayed with them a week for orientation. Sao Paulo's traffic even in 1960 was terrific, as four million people fought to find their way along the inadequate arteries, and driving the jeep in it made Bill jittery at first. Soon they were all alone, with two city churches and an early-morning radio broadcast to look after—all in the Portuguese language, which they hardly knew.

Bill communicated the gospel, however, and during this time a pastor with his whole congregation came into greater enlightenment and wanted to be baptized. The believers in the area headed out to the sea to watch the ceremony and stood on the sandy shore. First, the pastor went forward to be baptized, and coming up out of the water the dear man started jumping about and raising his hands.

“Praise the Lord! That's it. Give God the glory, brother!” Bill

encouraged, as incoherent sounds came from the pastor. “Oh glory, hallelujah!” On the shore the crowd joined in the excitement, energetically praising the Lord for this brother who was being so mightily touched.

“Yes, let the Lord have his way!” Bill continued and was surprised when the man dropped underwater again and came up spluttering. Thinking he was just falling under the power, Bill gathered his great strength around the pastor to support him in his joy. The pastor’s arms waved even faster, and the church praised the Lord even more.

By now Bill was having a hard time holding him, and once more he slipped from Bill’s grasp and dropped headlong into the sea, arms flaying wildly. This time Bill followed him under and pulled him up, but not wanting to break what seemed to be such a mighty move of God, he lifted the pastor’s hands once more into the air with a loud “Amen, yes, praise God!”

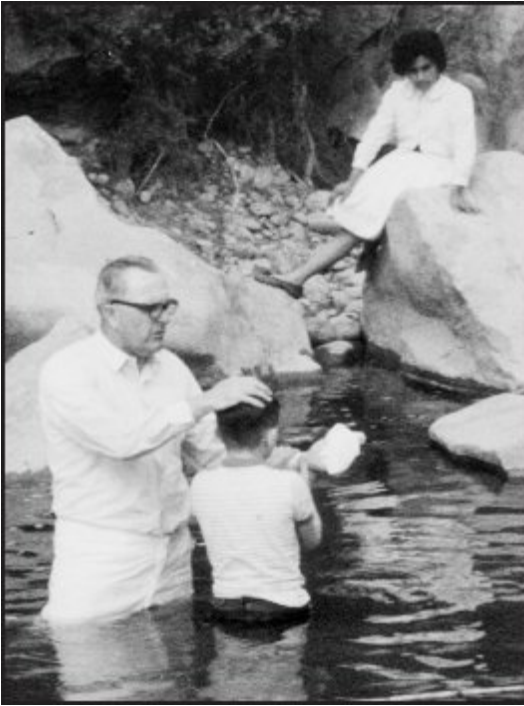
The folks on the beach thought it was all very wonderful and had never before seen such a baptism. Bill, however, was beginning to think that perhaps there was something badly wrong, for the sounds the man was making were not real tongues, and he seemed to be struggling to throw himself headlong into the ocean. Had Bill been fooled? Did this man have a suicidal spirit? Bill stopped worshipping and put his ear close to the pastor’s mouth to listen carefully to the words.

“Hu . . . hu . . . help me—I’ve . . . prop . . . prop . . . dropped my false teeth into the water and lost them!” the man was screaming frantically, struggling to be free to find them.

As the time prior to the Bakers’ return decreased, the Word of God increased more and more into a revival that would later become legendary. Having seen God confirm His Word with signs and wonders, Bill was happy to have had a little part in it. Once more it was time to move on. Where to this time? He sought God’s will for the future.



Arriving home one month before Bill's healing.



Bill baptizing Verner in the Land of the Inca.

CHAPTER Twenty-Nine

A Leading to Lima

God's will seemed to be prodding Bill to Peru. The mission board agreed to send the Drosts to Lima, the capital, as pioneers. Bill relished the prospect, for he would once again be in a Spanish-speaking country, where he was more at ease with the language. Back on location, the Bakers were getting ready to take the Drosts to the airport in the jeep, but with three of the four boys now teenagers, and with all of their luggage, they would need two vehicles.

"Honey, I'll just go to the post office with the boys while you go ahead and book the baggage through," said Bill, who could never bear the thought of missing mail.

"I don't know about that. It's getting late already, and you know what the traffic is like down there," cautioned Ruth.

"Don't worry, we've got time. You just go on and we'll meet you there." Against her better judgment, she gave in.

"Last call, last call. Would the Drost family please board their aircraft immediately!" barked the intercom. Ruth paced the check-in area in angry frustration. Now it was five minutes before takeoff, and still there was no sign of Bill and the boys. Apologetically, she explained the delay to the man at the counter. He was remarkably good-humored about the situation, replying that they would hold the flight for a while. Ruth thanked him effusively and went back to pounding the floor. When twenty more minutes had gone by, she gave up hope that the aircraft would wait any longer and did not have the cheek to ask for an extension. No doubt it was the traffic. Why had she let them go? Fervently she prayed that God would keep the plane till they arrived. Had they lost their money on the tickets?

Now it was forty-five minutes after the scheduled takeoff time, and still there was no sign of them. Ruth felt terrible, for the plane was still sitting out there on the tarmac waiting, with its passengers no

doubt becoming more irate by the minute.

More than an hour after departure time they arrived on the run, sweating. Ruth glared at Bill as he explained about the traffic being “even worse than ever.” To the glares and angry murmurings of its occupants, the ticket clerk accompanied them aboard the aircraft. “Come this way, please,” he beckoned to their surprise. The flight is overbooked, so you won’t mind traveling up front, will you?” he whispered softly in Ruth’s ear as she followed him. Mind! She would have been happy to have traveled in the baggage compartment after causing such a delay; instead, they were flying first class to Peru!

Peru is South America’s third-largest nation. Its name is derived from a Quechua Indian word indicating “land of abundance,” and during the Inca civilization that had indeed been the case, even with a population estimated at twelve million. Before the Spanish arrived, different Indian groups had occupied the widely diverse natural regions, and the area was not unified politically until 1438. This was accomplished by the fabled Incas who, starting as a small tribe around their capital, Cuzco, had set out on a career of conquest that within a century had established them an empire stretching from Colombia’s border to central Chile—a distance of 2,500 miles.

The sudden great Inca expansion was one of the most extraordinary events in history. The two men who moved it, Viracocha’s son, Pachacuti (1438-71), and his son, Topa (1471-93), have been aptly compared to Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great. Topa’s son, Huayna Capac (1493-1525), continued conquests in Ecuador, but the empire had by then about reached its natural limits. The consolidation of Latin America in that period, by the Aztecs to the north and Incas to the south, would greatly facilitate the Spanish seizure.

Balboa’s discovery of the Pacific in 1513 opened Spanish interest in South America’s west coast, and the stage was now prepared for Pizarro. Together with another soldier, Diego de Almagro, and the priest Hernando de Luque, he explored Peru and by 1527 had become convinced of the Incas’ fabulous wealth. The governor of Panama, however, remained unmoved, so Pizarro returned to Spain

seeking a mandate from Charles I.

In the court of the king, Pizarro painted such a picture of plunder that he received authority to conquer and govern. Setting out audaciously in early 1531 with just 180 men, he established a base in north Peru and crossed the mountains to make contact with Inca Atahualpa, recently victorious in a civil war against his half brother and residing near Cajamarca with an army of thirty thousand.

Not discerning that the Spaniard was riding the surf of history, Atahualpa accepted the invitation to meet Pizarro's measly band of men with scorn. Making the mistake of entering into negotiations with an inadequate bodyguard, he was taken prisoner by treachery, and a large ransom was demanded for his release. After receiving their ransom, the Spanish added treachery to treachery by having him executed, Atahualpa's murder of his half-brother in the civil war providing the pretext. As a means of controlling the Indians, Pizarro recognized Manco Capac, Huascar's brother, as the emperor. By November 1533, the Spanish occupied Cuzco, and the colonial period had arrived.

With the fall of Quito (now in Ecuador), Diego de Almagro left to conquer his own territory of Chile. In 1535, Pizarro, to facilitate communications with Panama, established a new city on the coast, named Lima, and allotted lands to the surviving soldiers of fortune.

One year later, trouble erupted in the form of an Indian rebellion led by Manco Capac, but it was subdued. Shortly afterwards, disgusted with Chile's poverty, Almagro returned to Cuzco and sought to seize it. The old friends were now enemies, and by 1541 their gold was gone forever; treachery had come full circle to take their lives too.

During the last half of the century, the Spanish crown established real control over the conquistadors' lands, and fearing he might prove dangerous, the viceroy, Toledo, ordered Manco Capac's son, Topa Amaru, killed. The Inca empire was finished.

The viceroyalty of Peru administered all of South America except Venezuela and Portuguese Brazil. While the land was worked, it

was the mining of precious metals that made the colony of Peru Spain's most important, and wealth, power, and prestige were loaded on Lima. Later many monasteries were established . . . so too was the Inquisition.

A severe and highly structured expatriate society was well established when the Bourbon dynasty of Spain undertook a series of reforms during the eighteenth century, which, by breaking South America into smaller administrative sections in an effort to improve colonial conditions, took much power from Lima. A decline of precious metal production further added to Peru's difficulties, and in 1780 the Indians, having suffered oppressive taxation and enforced labor since the conquest, revolted again. Their leader was the wealthy and educated Topa Amaru II, a descendant of the last emperor. Topa was captured and executed after a year, but the Indians struggled on until 1783, causing more economic disruption.

The early nineteenth century saw Peru influenced by European intellectual development, but not by its revolutions, as were other colonies. It remained loyal to overseas rule mainly because of the conservative attitude of its aristocracy and the presence of much Spanish military power. Liberation would have to come from a man outside.

San Martin, the Argentinian general and liberator, was the man. Intent on destroying the remaining Spanish influence in South America, he freed Chile in 1818 and used it as a base for a seaborne attack on Peru. By 1820 he had occupied the Peruvian port of Pisco, forcing the viceroy and his army to flee into the interior. San Martin entered Lima, and on July 28, 1821, Peruvian independence was declared. Lacking power to pursue the Spanish inland, he then returned south, leaving it to Bolivar, the liberator of northern South America, to oust them. After assuming supreme power in Peru, Bolivar finished the job with the battles of Junin and Ayachucho. The end of 1824 saw Peru's independence assured.

Independence, as many other nations would find a century later, failed to provide solutions to the country's problems. The ambitions of the military made much impact on its government, and after having fought and lost a war with Chile (mostly over nitrate deposits) in which Lima was looted, Peru plodded into more

modern times.

The land itself consists of three major areas, of which a narrow, arid desert belt along most of the Pacific coast has become the population and economic center. This area receives less rainfall than the Sahara, and in Lima it never rains, except when the Peruvian cold current called El Niño (“the Child”) becomes capricious. This usually only happens once every few decades, and when it does the country is devastated with floods.

The second area consists of the Andean mountains, steep, complex, and providing relief from the tropical heat. On the rolling, relatively lower slopes—those between 7,500 and 11,500 feet—were the principal cities of the Inca Empire. This region is fertile with rich volcanic soils and is also heavily populated. As the land rises higher, the climate gets colder and the population thins, but fruit and potatoes are grown up to around 14,000 feet, which is the limit of human habitation.

To the east, the Andes drop into the wet, densely forested third region—the Amazon River and its effluents—rich in wildlife. Here primitive tribes pursue their rudimentary agriculture in the rich alluvial soil of shifting stream banks.

Before the advent of the airplane, travel in Peru presented immense difficulties, which long impeded national unity. Iquitos, on the upper Amazon, is only 600 miles from Lima, but travelers preferred to take a 7,000 mile detour that included the Pacific, the Isthmus of Panama, the Atlantic, and the Amazon, rather than cross the Andes.

Within fifty years of the arrival of the Spanish, nearly ten million Indians had perished. The Spanish imported black slaves, and following the prohibition of slavery, Chinese were imported as farm laborers. Later, new groups of Nordic whites, Spaniards, and Japanese arrived.

Differences in lifestyles and attitudes within the groups are still pronounced. Peruvians of Spanish descent and the mestizos live mainly along the coast, control the country, and own the bulk of the booty. The Indians of the mountains, not noted for ambition, make up half the population and live in extreme poverty.

Into this pot, not quite knowing where their labors would lie, Bill and his family were about to be dropped.



Judith, Isabel, LaVerne, Drost family, Wiens family.



Boat trip: Ruth, Wynn, Wayne, Verner.

CHAPTER Thirty

The Peruvian Pot

The strange city—full as it was of the finest Spanish colonial architecture and the history of empire, yet sitting on the sea surrounded only by stark sand dunes, all of which was set against the backdrop of the towering Andes—they found startling. Within a week they located a house to rent, and the boys, completely at home in the Spanish language, enrolled in the local schools. Bill had the sense that a new adventure was beginning.

But where to begin? They met many Wycliffe Bible translators who were in Lima for rest from the labors in the faraway jungles and received much information concerning the Indian tribes. Talking to the translators fired them with inspiration and a burden for the Indians, but somehow Bill did not feel free to leave Lima. In the meantime he roamed the city, witnessing everywhere as was his custom. So too did the boys, who, delighting in the work of the Lord, had become almost as aggressive in evangelism as their father.

Bill called to Ruth, “I’m just going for a drive.” He had been in prayer seeking direction from God. They had been in Lima nearly two months now and he felt a restlessness—a need to get his teeth in something. It was early evening.

“Be sure you’re back for supper,” Ruth shouted from the kitchen. She needn’t have bothered because Bill hardly heard her. His mind was far away, filled with a divine yearning for revival.

He drove slowly through the center of town, looking, wondering, feeling after the leading of the Spirit. Nothing. Arriving at the outskirts of the city, he felt impressed to turn down a certain road on which he had never before been. The road, almost at the edge of the sand dunes, was badly sealed and had dirt tracks leading off into depressing-looking shanty towns. After bumping along a few minutes, Bill thought perhaps he had made a mistake. Then he knew he hadn’t.

Ruth was just clearing up after the boys when Bill burst in so quickly that he hardly had time to turn the door handle. "Honey, listen! I was driving down this road at the edge of town. . . . I was just going to turn back when I saw that it led to a *barriada* [district] full of Indians, so I stopped the car for a moment. Then suddenly I had a vision of a great light over a little cluster of the shacks. I know God was speaking to me. I know He has something there for us! We will go out there this Sunday when the boys can come with us," he shot out with excitement.

"Praise the Lord!" shouted the boys together as Bill went on to describe the place.

Hardly able to sleep because of his curiosity and anticipation, he went again the following morning to the *barriada* and found that it contained about fifty thousand people. They were all Quechua Indians from the jungles and the mountains, having been told they would find gold, wealth, and easy work in Lima. Unable to read or write and with little education, the only thing they found on arriving was themselves stranded and in poverty. The government was thus forced to grant them land to squat on and somehow try to keep them from starving. The Indians would erect their tiny, one-room boxes overnight—merely structures of straw mats with flat mud roofs and mud floors. There was no running water or sanitation in them. Each day the water truck came to fill barrels placed at the entrance to the *barriada*. Some kept chickens, which scurried everywhere, but there were no comforts. It was an archetypal slum.

The women, dressed in long, brightly colored, homespun skirts, had long hair braided into a tail and carried their babies strapped to their backs in a shawl. The men wore their own black, braided hair under a felt hat, and everybody walked about barefooted. They were considered the lowest of the low, and for all the contact the educated of Lima had with the Indians, the *barriada* might as well have been on the moon. In fact, simply to associate with these Indians caused one to be shunned and despised, as Bill and Ruth would soon find out.

Sunday came and the boys piled into the car with their instruments, though nobody knew quite what was going to happen. On arrival at

the *barriada*, Ruth was greatly moved when she saw the primitive conditions in which the Indians lived. The streets, if they could be called that, were very narrow, so they parked their station wagon near the entrance.

“My, these people are so poor it’s pitiful,” remarked Ruth, looking around as she got out of the car. “Well, what do we do now?” she added, half to herself.

“Maybe we’ll just take a walk around,” said Bill, as though walking around such a place was the most natural thing in the world. It almost meant inviting themselves into everybody’s hut, since the dwellings were built so close together, and being white they would certainly be noticed.

“I don’t know about that,” returned Ruth dubiously. Among other things, she had visions of the boys wandering off and getting lost in the labyrinth of alleys. On hearing her worries, the boys protested vigorously, and they were still discussing what to do when they heard the music of a guitar. Looking in its direction, they saw the musician sitting outside a house. About him were a couple of other men, who began singing. Listening closer, their hearts leapt and they could hardly believe their ears, for the men were singing gospel songs. In no doubt about what to do now, the Drosts hurried towards them.

“Hi, we heard you folks singing and thought we might join you!” said Bill jovially, trusting that at least one of them spoke Spanish. “We are missionaries from Canada who have come to start a work. I’m Bill, this is my wife Ruth, and these are our boys.”

The Indians, who fortunately spoke Spanish, warmed to them, and they were invited to join the singing. Wynn, Wayne, and Gerald added gusto to the music with their guitar and accordion, and at the close of the service everybody was delighted.

Like the Colombians fifteen years earlier, these were mountain people whom the Drosts understood well. These Indian men had just come down, like so many others, to find nonexistent work. They had attended some gospel services before leaving home, and though they knew little, they were hungry souls with a love for

God. When the Indians asked if they would return and teach them, they leapt like an itchy flea to the invitation, even though it meant opening their ministry in the *barriada*. There was no doubt about divine leading—it was perfect, Bill reflected with joy on the way home.



A Sunday service in the *barriada*, Ermitania, where the people lived in straw- mat houses. The man at the extreme right was the guitar player who caught Bill's attention.



Peter Quist and Wynn Stairs.



Mike and Lorna Wieteska.

CHAPTER Thirty-One

Cloudburst

Lima's climate was frustrating. For eight months of the year the sun shone without interruption, and for the other four a thick mist enveloped it so that one never saw the sun. When it was misty, the uninitiated were tempted to think that perhaps it might rain; it never did. The sky, however, was about to open, though this time it would not be a capricious "Child" lashing Lima with lightning storms but a caring Father bestowing showers of blessings.

Beginning the work in a *barriada* was not the way to win friends and influence people—especially a *barriada* called Ermitania. But you did what you could, or rather what heaven wanted, if you did anything at all, and God's actions, Bill knew, had not always followed the dictates of diplomacy. If they had, Bill would have failed at the first fence. They received condescension even from Christians over their approach, while the local version of the yuppies (young urban professionals) left them completely alone. No matter, their mountain men wanted to rise even higher, and to them would they go.

The first three converts were soon baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, as were a group of other Indians who had quickly joined themselves to the newly inaugurated gospel meetings. Paco, the musician, was a natural leader and obviously destined to be a pastor, so Bill took him under his special care. Before long a thriving, Spirit-filled church had erupted in Ermitania, as the Indians witnessed the power of God to heal the sick and change lives.

One old lady named Maria scraped together her life's savings to buy a Bible, even though she could not read or write. She carried it everywhere and never hesitated to stop people, politely asking them to recite it to her; in this manner she moved many people to know the Lord. It was like Cali recreated, and the Drostos recalled the busy, busy days with the people in Colombia.

As well as into other *barriadas*, the word spread to the mountain regions. Bill began making up-country calls, and an old malady of malaria recurred, sapping his strength. One night, having made a long trip to a tiny Andean town, he felt so ill that he could not remain upright. Wearily he slumped onto the only bed, which was simply a straw mat on the boards, and when service time came he still felt too sick to stand. A fine one you are, he thought to himself. You preach healing, the people are waiting with expectation to hear you, and you cannot even lift yourself from the ground! Putting on a brave face, he beckoned to his host: "You folks just go ahead and sing. If you help me to my feet later, I'll preach," he said, hardly stifling a shudder.

Somehow he struggled through the message but had to lie down again, on the platform, while the altar service went on. As perspiration poured from him, the noise and vibrations along with the malaria made him shake even more with misery, and his temples pounded in torment. The fever was making him feel far away when suddenly an ignorant Indian lady spoke out in flawless English: "Living water is flowing through me; the living water is flowing through me!"

Bill recognized the voice of God in prophecy. "Lord, if You can speak through that little woman who cannot even read or write, You can heal my body!" he responded in faith. From that moment the malaria was gone forever.

Back in Ermitania, a straw-mat church was erected. In the roof over the folding table, which doubled as a pulpit, was placed a piece of clear plastic to allow in light. The pews were only rough, backless benches, but that did not deter the people from staying for hours to worship. Hope was now infecting the hopeless; previously apathetic Indians became motivated to make not only themselves better for God but their surroundings better for themselves. Especially wonderful to see were the outcasts becoming the called, as young lives responded to the challenge to carry the gospel.

As in Colombia, though, opposition was around. The taunters threw a particularly heavy barrage of stones one night while Bill was preaching, which broke through the plastic roof and rained onto the pulpit. More thick-skinned than a grandfather rhinoceros when it

came to apprehending that he was somewhat unwanted, he casually tipped the table clear of splinters and went on, as usual, with the message. “Hallelujah!” echoed the mountain men.

While Ermitania’s children knew nothing of school life, there was many an Andean version of the Artful Dodger in their ability to charm out of nothing a few cents to save brother or sister from starvation. With these unlikely lads Bill and his boys started a Sunday school to turn out Artful Dodgers . . . of the devil. Some became such capable confronters for Christ that they grew up to be ministers.

Events were moving so quickly that when the Colombian church—itsself still forging forward in rapid expansion—heard about the work, they offered help. By faith two Colombian ladies, Isabel and Judith, came to assist, together with LaVerne Larson, whose missionary parents were still with the Colombian work. This was the beginning of a solid missionary commitment from the Colombians. A little later they would send missionaries and pastors to three continents.

Also anxious to help growth, the North American mission board, headed by Bill’s old mentor and lifelong friend, Wynn Stairs, commissioned Grace and David Wiens to move over to Peru with their four bubbling, blond-headed children. All of them fitted in like ferrets in a rabbit warren and quickly began pursuing Peruvians everywhere.

“Hernando Bill, I have a problem.” Bill glanced from the person he was addressing to listen to the problem of the strong-featured Judith.

“You have a problem?” Bill queried.

“Well, actually not I. I am visiting a lady who has cancer very bad. She wants to be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. We need help to bring her to the meetings.”

“OK. We’ll arrange for Gerald to help bring her with you,” Bill answered.

The lady came. Her swollen abdomen was filled with cancer that an operation and cobalt treatment had not been able to kill, and the hospital had sent her home to die. Both she and her family were filled with the Spirit, but as the weeks went by she was confined to bed, and despite prayer she rapidly deteriorated. Judith continued to visit her regularly and refused to give up hope, though the lady had fallen almost into a coma.

One day, unexpectedly, this same lady popped pertly into church to give this testimony: "The other night I was feeling so sick, when suddenly the Lord appeared to me. He was dressed all in white and looked at me so kindly. Then He reached into my abdomen with His hands and removed the cancer! Oh, thank You, Jesus. Oh, praise the Lord!" She broke down weeping. Following the service she took a seven-hour bus ride into the mountains to tell all her relatives and friends what the Lord had done. The gospel was threatening to rock the unrighteous. So was something else.

About the time David and Grace arrived, Bill and the boys were in the western Yunga region, a system of narrow, enclosed valleys at the bottom of rocky canyons that were elevated between three and seven thousand feet in the lower Andes. There the Indians worked their terraced fields under a hot and sultry sun. One morning while walking, Bill and the boys became aware of a peculiar stillness in which all of nature seemed to be tense and waiting. The air became ionized and oppressively heavy, and an aura of unreality took over, so that they could almost imagine the coming of the Lord was at hand.

In the fields the workers began to look up and about; they too had sensed something. Then it happened. A deep, low roar, together with a rumbling, arose under their feet and grew each moment in intensity. Earthquake! Never before had they witnessed such a severe one. The whole world about them was shaking, while the roar echoed between the canyon walls like a cannonade. Then the very walls of the canyons began breaking, spilling great boulders that bounded on and on with the bellowing madness of banished banshees. In the fields the earth opened then closed again like the mouth of a hungry whale, swallowing everything about it, including any unfortunate Indian who happened to be in the way. If they

went screaming into oblivion, the uproar of all nature in upheaval stifled them to such an extent that theirs was a silent slaughter.

Lying on the twitching earth beside the boys, Bill beheld one of the most amazing scenes of his life. Men and women were running aimlessly around the fields in panic, arms in the air like people in an old-fashioned prayer meeting! They were indeed shouting a desperate prayer for God to show mercy and spare them. The tremors passed and then within a few hours came again and again and again and again. Like the pains of a woman in protracted labor, the earthquakes and tremors lasted a whole week. Vast areas of Peru had been affected, and Lima had not escaped. It had been one of the worst earthquakes in memory.

When things settled down again, Bill felt compelled to go and share the gospel with the Indians he had seen in the fields crying out to God for mercy. If they really meant it, they would have an opportunity. Jesus, he explained, gives peace even in the moment of the earthquake, and a work began among them.

CHAPTER Thirty-Two

Thanks for the Memory

“Bill, you can’t leave now. . . . It doesn’t make sense. . . . We’re in the middle of a great move of God.”

“I know, Dave, I know . . . but when you think about it, so was Philip in Samaria. I can’t help it; I have to go—I know I have to go.”

Bill was explaining to David Wiens that the Lord was calling him to Spain and that after the next furlough they would not be returning to Peru. He said “they” by faith, for everybody was having the same reaction, including his wife, who was dead set on returning to South America. But what could he do? The Divine Drummer was now beating out a Spanish bolero. He could hear it distinctly, and it was already tugging at his feet. He had to dance to the tune.

If he was encountering opposition in Peru, Bill never worried that the mission board would not approve the move. He knew that they trusted him to follow the right leading. He knew also that as God was calling, God would make the way—no matter what. But he further knew that God helps those who help themselves, and he therefore had some preparations to make once he returned home.

Leaving Peru was almost as hard as leaving Colombia; in fact, it was harder in one respect: the work did not have the degree of development that Colombia’s work had when they left. While it was a vibrant church it was still an infant church and had yet to cut its second teeth. In that process—the maturing of a pool of national pastors persuaded of God’s promises and themselves confidently reproducing others—many childhood infections would come along, and he yearned to be at the bedside. A bad reaction could debilitate a church body for life. Paul must have often felt the same anxiety, as he walked on to the next city. Still, Dave and Grace were there, and the “unlikely lads” were working hard. All in all, Bill had reason to be optimistic.

For the first time ever, it was a divided family that finished their packing for furlough. Bill was still the only one with a vision to go

to Spain; the others were adamant about returning to South America. The Holy Spirit would have to put the pieces into place.

It was the fall of 1966, and it was Canada. The boys had begun a high school year at home for once and were loving it. They were among a lot of people their own age, and they were at the age when those things mean very much. The churches were well developed, and there were always camps, special programs, and all sorts of other activities for teens and young adults. Life in North America, with all its comforts and attractions, was wooing them.

Ruth was settled into the Bible school at Fredericton, happy to be teaching missions. She concentrated on the wonderful, vast, varied continent of South America, which she knew so well. The old, cultured countries of Europe left her cold. But Bill still had this idea to go to Spain and was busy stirring interest wherever he went. He had even persuaded a local businessman to make an exploratory trip there with him in the new year, but everybody knew that there was no religious liberty in Franco's Spain, and she could see no point in it.

Bill indeed was busy, not only stirring interest but drumming up support. Wynn Stairs was truly with him, as were some others. The more Bill spoke about it, the more it became fixed in people's minds that they were going to Spain. He knew the family did not appreciate this, and he was not intending to bring indirect pressure on them by doing it; he just could not help talking about Spain.

When the new year came, he had a setback. The man who was planning to go with him had to drop out because of time pressures, though he did offer Bill fifteen hundred dollars to help with the trip. With others reiterating to him that there was no religious liberty in Spain, that it was closed to mission work, and with his family still opposed, he was forced to think hard. Had he indeed missed the mind of the Master? After much prayerful reflection, the Drummer's rap remained.

The aircraft was on its final approach and the lights of Madrid were gleaming below. After visiting Ireland, England, Holland, and Belgium to renew old times, Bill was at last in Spain. It was late and he had no hotel booked, but he felt a deep calm and peace, and as

he looked again at the lights of Madrid an inner voice told him: "You are getting near to where My will is for you." He had never really doubted it.

As he passed through customs, a well-dressed man approached him and asked in English, "Excuse me, but are you off the Brussels flight?"

"Yes, I am."

"Was there a tall, thin person with a dark beard on your flight? I'm waiting for him," he explained.

"No, I have not noticed such a man on the plane, nor while waiting for the baggage," Bill replied with assurance.

"Hmmm. . . ," the stranger thought for a moment, "perhaps business has detained him. By the way, can I offer you some assistance? I speak Spanish."

"Thank you very much, but I won't trouble you. I speak Spanish myself. You see, I am a missionary," he declared.

The man went to wait beside the door, still perhaps hoping to meet his friend. After a time Bill was organized with his baggage and passed towards him. Again the man spoke, "Where will you be staying tonight?"

"I have no plans at the moment."

"The city is crowded at present. There is a big football match—a cup final—and all the hotels are full. If you like, I can take you to the hotel that was reserved for the man I was supposed to meet."

"Why, thank you. Yes, that would be a help."

The man assisted him with the luggage into a classy European car, and they drove off to the center of town. Pulling up outside a five-star hotel, he went to the lobby to book Bill in under his friend's name, then bade him goodbye and good luck!

In the morning Bill was up early as usual and after prayer went for

a walk. The volume of traffic on the main street amazed him, and he wandered on a little while, getting the feel of the place. Lost in thought, he suddenly realized that he did not know where his hotel was! Not only that, he did not know its name! Walking near him on the street was a young man. Feeling a little foolish Bill said to him, "Excuse me, but do you know where there is a big hotel around this way? I'm supposed to be staying in it, but I didn't get its name and don't have the address. It's beside a movie house."

"I'm going past that way; I'll take you," the young man replied. He was quite friendly and talkative. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I'm a missionary."

The young man looked pleasantly surprised. "I'm a believer too. What denomination are you with?"

"I'm a Pentecostal."

"Praise the Lord, so am I! Would you like to come to church with me tonight?"

"I'd be delighted!" responded Bill.

Anybody who knows Madrid today knows how unlikely it is for the first person you bump into to be Pentecostal. In those days it was a chance in a million. But then—it was not by chance.

On arriving at the church that evening Bill found that it was small, with just thirty-five people or so. After asking him some questions, the people invited Bill to bring the message.

"Why, don't you have a speaker?" he asked.

"The man we are expecting has not arrived."

Bill took as his text, "Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ unto them." The people seemed pleased that he knew Spanish and responded to his talk. They invited him for the following night, and this time he found a larger crowd. That night a man came to sit beside him and started talking to him in English. He explained that

he had been a missionary in Cuba and had heard that a Canadian who could speak Spanish was going to be ministering.

“Yes, they have invited me to preach,” Bill told him. The man asked if it was OK to tape the messages. “Sure, by all means,” Bill agreed.

At the end of the service the missionary from Cuba offered to take Bill to the hotel. He had a Volkswagen camper, completely equipped, and they were soon there. Strangely enough, for once a parking space was available at the entrance, and the man pulled to a very deliberate stop. He asked Bill a bit more about himself, and Bill explained carefully that he was over to see what things were like and feel things out, because he believed that God was calling him to minister in Spain.

“How are you going to travel?”

“Oh, I may hitchhike or go by train or bus. I’m not really worrying about that.”

“How would you like this van? I want to sell it.”

Bill was surprised. “I couldn’t afford to buy anything like this,” he stated.

“Look, I came to Spain with the same idea as you, but now I believe God does not want me here. I still owe a small amount on it. If you want to pay the little that I owe, you can have it. I believe it will be a blessing.”

It certainly would. He would have no hotel bills, no bus fares, and he could stop anywhere to eat or sleep. “Praise the Lord! Yes, of course I’ll take it. Thanks.”

“I’ll call for you at six in the morning. If you can drop me off at the airport, it’s yours!”

The next morning Bill took him to the airport and then started straight out on his own journey around the Iberian Peninsula. He was delighted: the Lord had given him a night in the best hotel, the following morning led him to meet Pentecostals, and now provided him with a camper! He wrote long letters to the family, trusting

that these things would move them. They did—a little—but the Lord would have to give him a longer pulley to move them all the way to Europe.

It took months to visit the land properly. Heading west he went first to Salamanca, famous for its knights and noble deeds. Then north to the Bay of Biscay and the town of La Corunna, lashed by winter winds, where Tennyson celebrated in verse the burial of Sir John Moore. After that he continued east through Burgos and the Basque country, where some lost sons of Noah were no doubt blown by chance in times forgotten to form an isolated pocket of people among the original inhabitants, and then to Bilbao.

Skirting the Pyrenees he crossed to brash, commercial Barcelona on the north Mediterranean coast, above which stood Columbus on his column, pointing an adventurous finger towards America. Following the coast through the wine-scented air of Tarragona he came to beautiful Peniscola, where a pope had wisely chosen to place a palace. And on and on, through sleepy white-washed villages filled with black-dressed widows waiting for who knew what, he went, heading south to the early spring. Passing through La Mancha, where Cervantes had made Don Quixote ride from, he paused on the plain to ponder the problem of human behavior—the same problem that had perplexed Cervantes.

In the south he felt a special warmth. Noticing a sign for Granada, the name rang some sort of bell, so he headed inland following it. On the way he picked up some English hitchhikers, who turned out to be a friendly crew. Though not claiming themselves Christians, they liked the idea that Bill was, and sang along with him the hymns they had learned at school. Later that day he dropped them at the Alhambra fort, with its terraced gardens etched against the clear March sky and hanging heavy with almond blossoms. The capture of Granada in 1492, last bastion of the Moors, had made entire Christendom rejoice: in St. Paul's Cathedral in London a special "Te Deum" was celebrated. Since the hitchhikers were going his way in the morning, he agreed to carry them along, and they set off together towards Gibraltar.

Bill had been more or less following his nose, without any planned direction. God was obviously doing some planning, though, for he

had just read in the newspaper that Franco had declared a degree of religious liberty.

After some hours of passing through mountains, far ahead on the coast he saw a city. “Boys, look on the map and tell me the name of that city.”

After a few moments they told him, “It is Malaga.”

On hearing that name his heart suddenly quickened, so he decided to drive into it. Waiting at a set of traffic lights, he asked a passing boy for directions, to make sure where he was, “Excuse me, but what is the name of this town?”

“Malaga, señor,” was the reply.

At that moment something clicked. The Holy Spirit flooded over him and brought to his memory something that happened years ago in Colombia, when an uneducated mountain sister had prophesied in English, which for her was an unknown tongue: “Malaga needs this gospel; Malaga needs this gospel!” No wonder they had no success in the small town they went to on the Colombian coast called Malaga! The prophecy was right—but it was for another Malaga, another time, another continent—for Malaga, Spain! For a long time Bill spoke in tongues, thanking God for the memory. He had finally made it.

Within a few days he was back in Canada with a longer pulley. But was it yet long enough? Gerald was now ready to make the move—solid, reliable Gerald. Ruth’s opposition was beginning to crack, but only a little, and she still wanted to go back to South America. As for the twins, they definitely did not want to go. In fact, they wanted to stay in Canada and finish the last year of high school that was before them. Verner (praise the Lord!) was still too young to put in his two cents’ worth. How could Bill move them more?

By using the lever of prayer, he finally came up with an idea: he would ask Ruth to give her students some information about Spain. That would make her study the place, and perhaps as she studied it herself, God would be able to show her its tremendous need. After a few days she agreed and began asking him all about what he had

seen there. This made him very happy. When she came back from class, she suggested that they take a boat . . . to Spain. That way, she explained, they would not have to wait months for their baggage. But would they have to wait for the boys?

It seemed that they would. The twins still wanted to stay, and there was no persuading them. "Well, boys, Gerald and I will go over for a year, and Mother will stay here with you three younger ones, to let you be in school. We will see what we can do during that time," Bill told them and left it at that.

Neither Ruth nor Bill really liked the arrangements and continued praying. After a few days, Wynn came to see Bill. "Dad, if it's gonna mean you and Mama are gonna have to be separated a whole year just because of us wanting to stay in Canada, I've made up my mind that I'll take the last year by correspondence. I'm ready to go with you."

Bill gave him a hug. "Thanks, son!" God was working some tremendous things in Wynn's life, for he loved to study and was a bright boy. Wynn did not discern it, but that willingness was preparing his own heart to become a successful soldier of Christ in Central America.

A few more weeks went by, and there was a missionary fellowship in Fredericton. They were late arriving and the place was packed, so while Bill was rushed to the platform the rest of the family squeezed in at the back. A few moments later Wynn Stairs stood up to announce that the Drost family would be going to Spain, and then he began to do some fund-raising. He went on to talk about what God had been doing with the Drosts and their missionary dedication. It was very moving. Beside her Ruth could see that Wayne was agitated and fidgety. While he knew of Wynn's decision, Wayne had not yet acquiesced to go and was feeling intimidated even though the plans about Ruth staying for the extra year in Canada remained the same.

At the end of the talk, many were touched and some consecrated their lives for missionary service. Suddenly Wayne shot from his seat to the altar, where he wept a long time. Bill and Ruth now knew that Wayne was going to Spain too.

CHAPTER Thirty-Three

Hallelujah Andalucia

Bill telephoned his travel agent in New York. Initially, the news was discouraging. “Reverend Drost, not many boats go to Spain these days carrying passengers, though there may be something in late October. Can you wait a few minutes while I check and phone you back?”

A little later the telephone rang. “This is the travel agency. We’re sorry, Reverend Drost, the only boat going that way has just two cabins left, but we don’t think it would interest you because it is only calling at one of the small ports in Spain.”

“Which one is that?”

“Malaga.”

“Hallelujah!”

“No, Reverend Drost, I said Malaga.”

“Oh, excuse me, sir, I said, ‘Hallelujah,’ because it hits the right spot—that is exactly where we want to go! I was just praising the Lord.”

The agent really didn’t understand at all but went ahead and made the booking for them anyway.

Several carloads of friends accompanied them to New York to wave them off through the stretching streamers. On the boat Bill had to be in the bottom bunk and managed to lose some weight on the eight-day trip over; the weather was rough and everything he ate just bounced back out.

Leaving Lisbon behind they came to Cape St. Vincent, then Cape Trafalgar, both scenes of great naval battles. Rounding out of the Atlantic into the straits and passing between Mount Sidi Musa in Africa and the giant Rock of Gibraltar in Europe, they entered the Mediterranean. As they passed through the ancient Pillars of

Hercules, they thought of how it was once believed that here the world ended and the sea poured into the abyss. Browning had pictured it perfectly:

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the northwest died away;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;

Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;

In the dimmest northeast distance dawned Gibraltar grand and grey;

“Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?”—say

Whoso turn as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,

While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

If Bill read it right, the Lord's planet promised to move towards Malaga.

The night before they were due to dock, the boys were so excited they couldn't sleep and spent their hours running between the two cabins, packing, and wondering about Spain. At seven A.M., with a warm breeze blowing off the land, the boat pulled into harbor. After what seemed like an age, their goods were cleared through customs and they were free to move through the imposing port gates out into the town. Nobody took any notice of them as they mingled with a thousand other tourists to wander down the main street, exploring. Soon four hungry mouths reminded them it was past lunchtime; this reminded Ruth that they had nowhere to go, so after booking a hotel for the night they went to make inquiries about more permanent living accommodations.

Things have changed a lot since the nineteenth-century novelist Galdos wrote of his homeland, “O Spain . . . one half of thy face fiesta; and the other misery.” Much of the misery is gone; the fiestas remain.

Malaga itself was founded by the Phoenicians and sits on Spain's

Costa del Sol, “the Sunshine Coast,” in the province of Andalucia. It is near the site of the biblical Tarshish, where Jonah was heading when trying to flee from God. Perhaps he was trying from there to pursue the possibility of proceeding through the Pillars of Hercules to the lost continent of Atlantis, which was rumored to lie beyond. Later, Andalucia became the first and last outpost of the Moors’ conquest on behalf of Islam. In more recent times it has been taken over by tourists from northern Europe, seeking the sun.

The following day they found an apartment to rent for three months in the tourist playground of Torremolinos, just eight kilometers down the coast. That same night they had their first home-cooked meal and began to settle in.

At that time in Spain there was no religious liberty in the true sense. No advertising was allowed in the press or on the radio; one could not erect a tent for a church service; nor could one open a hall and put a sign out saying, “Come to Church.” In fact, a group could not meet in a hall at all unless they had twenty or more persons committed to their cause. Bill had been through it all before in Colombia. Within a week he was pounding the streets, parks, and even the amusement arcades, looking at the multitudes of young people and yearning to reach them.

Christmas came, and with it the holiday season, when the kids had nothing much to do. Having now moved into Malaga itself, Bill determined to get better acquainted with them. As usual the devil sought to discourage him. He was looked down on for talking with young people, his motives were both misinterpreted and maligned, and it was even said that he gave away money to win them to his religion. As he had always done, he ignored the slander and continued anyway, gradually winning the confidence of some. Antolin, Esteban, and Jacinto, three boys who were attending a trade school, became interested and were invited to the house for fellowship and to meet his sons. Meanwhile his own boys were busy witnessing in the coffee bars in the middle of town. The three Spanish boys then began to tell their friends at school about the Lord, and one Sunday a group of about fifteen came to their home for a meeting. They had been in Malaga about five months, and having the required number of people, they decided to open a hall.

Soon the young men began to be baptized, but then came opposition. The government got wind of something happening and sent around investigators to ask questions. Then they told them to close the hall, not even allowing them to go inside and take so much as a song book out, until further orders.

Trying to keep the group together was a problem. The parents of most were furious, threatening to put their children out of their homes unless they stopped seeing the Drosts. The young people stood firm, even when their parents came to poke their fingers in Bill's face and tell him to get out of the country. He had no business trying to change the religion of their children, they told him.

After two months of prayer and dueling with the authorities, they received permission to reopen the hall, strictly for two hours only, once a week on Sunday nights. Six weeks after that, they were allowed to open again on a full-time basis.

In that spring of 1968 Gerald married Donna, a girl he had first met in Brazil and the daughter of missionaries. Non-Catholic foreigners at the time could not marry in Spain, so it meant a trip to Gibraltar. Although "the Devil's Tongue," as the Spanish called the impregnable British fortress, is connected by land to Spain, Franco had closed the border, deciding that if he could not get the British out he would lock them in! They had to get there by boat . . . via Africa!

Walking down the narrow streets of the Rock as a wedding party made them feel like they were celebrating a Jewish wedding, especially as the numerous Jewish merchants have the habit of standing outside their shops watching the world go by. On getting to the office, they were informed that the time for the ceremony had been put back two hours—just the time they were supposed to be having the wedding meal. With no time to do that and get back to the boat after the ceremony they once more walked, feeling very conspicuous, down the main street, to eat the meal first.

The fall of that year also saw the first wedding among the Spanish believers. It was a big step for them to go to the priest and tell them why they had become Protestants, and many papers had to be obtained before the wedding could proceed.

From the industrial school, boys of fourteen and fifteen were showing promise for the ministry: Bernado, Cristobal, Jose Miguel, Jose Luis and his brother Juan, Enrique, Carlos, and others. They took their turns at leading songs and began to bring little messages. Just after the new year, Wynn came to speak with his father.

“Dad, I feel the Lord would have me go to Madrid and see what can be done there for the gospel.”

Bill looked at his son. He was not yet nineteen, the age when kids are thinking about Bible college if anything, and here he was, wanting to go out alone and start a work in the capital. Bill almost wept. “Son,” he said, “I’ll pray about it.”

Pray about it he did and decided to let him go. But there was little that Bill had to offer in the way of finance, and no one knew where he would stay or how it would be with him. Taking him to the railway station late one night, with not much more than a packed suitcase and a packed lunch, they could only commend him to God. The sobs of the young people broke the silence as he went on his way.

In Madrid he stayed at the cheapest hotels and walked everywhere to save money. Often he was cold and hungry, but he kept plugging and witnessing so that before long he was ready to have a baptism. He telephoned his father and asked him to come up and perform it.

Now it was Wayne’s turn to leave the roost. A letter came from Paul Moulton in Peru, a young man who was endeavoring to start a work in Iquitos, on the Amazon: Would Wayne go over to help and be his interpreter? Bill remembered his son’s burden for South America. When they were last in Canada, he had been awakened one night to the sound of sobs from Wayne’s bedroom. Opening the door he found him praying, overcome with a desire to labor with those he had lived among for so long. His father’s heart felt against him going so far away, but his better judgment and experience told him to keep hands off and trust his son to the will of God. All he could do was share his experiences and knowledge of the dangers, and counsel him on how best to act.

Not being able to afford a plane ticket, they found a boat, which in

those days was the cheapest form of transportation, and once more streamers were stretching in farewells. All this was serving to inspire the Spanish young people. If the twins could work for God at so early an age, why, so could they. They grew up seeing, and expecting, results. God would work with them also. But there was a price. As the boat left the dock Ruth realized that Bill was missing from the party. She found him in the car, slumped over the wheel and sobbing his heart out.

Some of Bill's fears were well founded. Not long after Wayne arrived in South America, Bill received a telegram: "Urgent. Have been robbed. Can you send money immediately?" They couldn't really, but of course they did. Wayne stayed in Peru for a year, later got married, and then went to Brazil as a missionary.

Verner also felt a call of God on his life and, after finishing Bible school, got married and returned to Spain to start a church in the northern city of Santander.



The van God gave Bill on his first trip to Spain.



First converts in Malaga.



Church building in Malaga.

Epilogue

By T. Wynn Drost

In 1967 Bill Drost arrived with his family in Malaga, Spain. The Lord blessed as the work in that beautiful port city of Malaga continued to grow. The work also expanded to other cities over the years: Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Santander, Granada, and others. Various people came to help from the United States, Canada, Colombia, England, Holland, and so on. Eventually all these churches were organized to form the FIAPE (Federacion de Iglesias Apostolicas Pentecostales de Espana), which means Federation of Apostolic Pentecostal Churches of Spain. They have a yearly convention, which continues to grow each year.

Peter Quist. When Bill Drost arrived in Holland on his way to reconnoiter Spain for the first time in 1966, he was introduced to a Dutchman named Peter Quist. At their first meeting something had clicked, forming an instant and lasting friendship between them. Brother Peter Quist became a source of great help and blessing. Before he passed away, Brother Quist had become well-known as a Oneness church leader in Europe. He started and established a very strong church in Rotterdam. In 1975, he and his church became instrumental in purchasing a building for the church in Malaga. That building cost over \$150,000 at the time. Not only did Brother Quist's church provide over half of the money, but he also was a source of great faith in believing God for the building that was obtained. That wasn't the only time they helped. They also helped purchase church buildings in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and other cities in Spain.

Mike and Lorna Wieteska. Sometime in 1975, Bill Drost met Mike Wieteska. Mike and his wife, Lorna, were British but had lived a number of years in Australia and New Zealand. They had been close friends of George and Marg Shalm, who were Canadian missionaries in Pakistan and India. Through that acquaintance they were given Bill Drost's address in Malaga, where they were sailing on their own boat from Britain back to Australia. It became a close friendship. In fact, the more Mike Wieteska got to know Bill Drost, the more he

wanted to put his story in writing. He managed to persuade Bill Drost to record many hours of his life's story on cassette and then transcribed it into written form.

Over the years, many had tried to get Bill Drost to write a book on his life. His typical reply would be, "I've noticed that those who write a book on their life die shortly after." Well, only a couple of weeks after giving Mike Wieteska the last cassettes of his life's story, Bill Drost passed away.

After leaving Spain and an extended time of experiences with Bill and Ruth Drost, the Wieteskas moved to Switzerland, where they started a church with some people they had met in other countries.

Joseph: healed of multiple sclerosis. During 1978, Bill Drost's nephew came to visit him. The main purpose of his visit was to seek healing, since he suffered from multiple sclerosis. He could only walk with the aid of a cane. His future was dark. He and Bill Drost spent long periods fasting and praying for his deliverance, with the church in Malaga sometimes joining in. For a while there was no change in his condition.

Joseph was walking through the house to the living room one day when suddenly he realized that he was healed. He let out a shout of praise and began walking quickly around the rooms without the help of a cane. Picking up chairs, he lifted them into the air and did many things that before had been impossible for him to perform. Joseph pictured in his mind the joy he would have when he returned to Canada and would be able to pick up his six-year-old son. It was on Saturday, March 3, that Joseph returned to Canada a healed and very happy man.

The end. Bill Drost's health began getting progressively worse. He had problems with hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, his prostate, and his heart. In fact, the doctor told Ruth Drost that he seemed to have the body of a man that was at least ten years older. He simply wore out for God!

In the Saturday night service on March 3, 1979, Ruth Drost noticed a special anointing in her husband's preaching, not realizing what would take place in a matter of hours. Before the prayer requests,

Bill Drost exhorted the people, with a tremendous unction, to launch out in the Spirit. He took as his text Ezekiel 47:3-5: "He brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand [cubits], and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."

Pacing back and forth, hands raised to God, he pleaded with great power for people to get into, and live in, the flow of the Spirit. The prayer meeting was mighty.

Suddenly Ruth Drost felt a premonition and looked up from praying. She noticed Bill sitting quietly, praying over them all; as his eyes went from one to another, he seemed far away. She wondered what his thoughts were at that moment. Perhaps they were on the next verse, which the congregation had not noticed: "And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river." Deep inside, Bill felt that the Lord was indeed bringing him again to the brink of a river. Then, too, the Lord was gently telling him that, this time, he must pass over.

As the people departed, Bill Drost gave them each warm farewells.

He and Ruth then retired to the kitchen to prepare supper, talking about the meeting. As Ruth slipped out to run water for a bath, she heard a thud and a groan. Running back, she found Bill slumped against the refrigerator. Under a massive stroke, which had rushed him to the bank of eternity, he staggered to the chair. Then the stroke seemed to push him out into the river. "Honey," he told Ruth, "this is the end."

He was in a deep coma until Monday evening, March 5, when he finally went to his reward.

Buried in Malaga. The funeral was delayed for a few days so that the family could arrive in time. Gerald was in Madrid, Spain; Wynn was living in El Salvador, Central America; Wayne was living in Brazil;

and Verner was in Bible school in Maine. The funeral was held on March 8, 1979. Bill Drost's remains were laid to rest in the International Cemetery (site 495) above the town of Benalmadena, around twelve miles southwest of Malaga. From there one can see the city of Torremolinos up one side of the Mediterranean coast (where the Drost family lived for three months when they first arrived in Spain in 1967) and the city of Fuengirola down the other coast. There in large letters is the epitaph: "BILL DROST THE PENTECOST."

The best inheritance. As Wayne was returning to Canada, he was asked by the immigrations officer where he was coming from.

"From my dad's funeral in Spain," was his reply.

"Oh, and did he leave you an inheritance?" was the next question.

"Yes, he did."

"And what would that be? Is it something you need to pay taxes or duty on?"

Wayne pulled Dad's Bible out from the case he was carrying, showed it to the customs officer, and said: "This is the only thing that he left me as an inheritance, but it is the best thing."

Ruth Drost continued her husband's vision of working for the Lord in Spain and has been heavily and deeply involved in the growth and progress of the work in that country. She has been a blessing and inspiration to the work in Spain till this day!



Ruth and Verner at graveside in Spain.